

HISTORY *of* WAR



WARTHOG

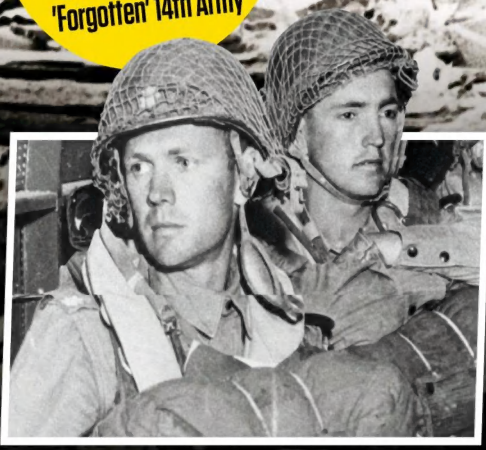
Inside the jet designed around a Gatling gun

1943 SICILY INVASION

James Holland reveals how Allied strategy and tenacity triumphed in the first assault on Axis Europe

OPERATION HUSKY

BURMA VETERAN
On serving with the 'Forgotten' 14th Army



SIEGE OF BELGRADE

How Ottoman ambitions were crushed by Balkan grit



PRUSSIA'S VICTORY

Discover the 19th century clash that brought France to its knees

KING & COUNTRY

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'Moving up to the Front'
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(Includes all 6 figures)



LW087



LW086



LW089



LW090



LW085



LW088

LW081

Fallschirmjäger in Normandy

BY THE SPRING OF 1944 the German High Command was sure that the Western Allies were preparing to soon invade France.

They just didn't know exactly *when* or precisely *where* the blow would fall...

And so they began to move certain key units into France especially close to the Atlantic coastal regions.

One of these units was the elite 6th Fallschirmjäger Regiment. In mid-May 1944, 6FJR was relocated from Belgium to the area around Caen in Normandy and then onto Carentan in the Cotentin Peninsula.

The German planners anticipated that the area around this small Normandy town might be among the best places for an Allied airborne drop.

The paratroopers of 6FJR were then assigned to an area 20 kilometers wide and 15 metres long covering the approaches to the major port city of Cherbourg.

D.DAY 6 JUNE 1944

On the evening of 5/6 June, orders were



LW088



LW089

received from Luftwaffe Command France that large Allied air transport formations were flying towards the Normandy coast.

6FJR were already on the alert and took up their prearranged battle positions.

Just after midnight the first

American parachutes began to open in the skies over Normandy.

K&C's FALLSCHIRMJÄGERS

King & Country's latest German paratroopers are being released in *two* batches of *6* dramatic figures each over *two* months.

The first 'six' FJ's can be seen moving alongside the Normandy 'bocage' towards the front.

The second 'six' are now in action in a variety of battle poses taking the fight to the enemy.

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LW084



LW083



LW081



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LW079

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LW080

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US troops in Messina, Sicily, 1943



Images: Wiki / CC / PD

CONTRIBUTORS



TOM GARNER

This issue Tom spoke with veteran Jim Kemp, who as a teenager served with the 'forgotten' 14th Army in Burma. Over on page 46 he reveals his experience fighting in the Battle of Ramree Island, and final victory on VJ Day.



DAVID SMITH

During the Franco-Prussian War, France turned to its world-renowned scientists to develop everything from high-explosives to machine-guns and alternative food supplies - David finds out more over on page 22.



MIKE HASKEW

In the build up to the invasion of Sicily, British intelligence hatched an unconventional plan to deceive the Axis as to the intended target of the Allied campaign - but did it work? Mike takes a look over on page 32.

Welcome

Under a year before Operation Overlord and the liberation of France, the first major invasion of Axis Europe was already underway: Operation Husky, the invasion of Sicily. This immense campaign was at the time the largest amphibious invasion in military history, and in terms of the numbers involved was even larger than the Normandy landings. This issue, historian James Holland unpacks the immense logistical and geographical challenges the Allies faced in planning the invasion, as well as the unforgiving conditions the men on the ground endured as they advanced during the blazing summer heat.

Tim Williamson
Editor-in-Chief

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OPERATOR'S HANDBOOK

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WAR_{in}
FOCUS
DESERT CAT

Taken: January 1991

An F-14A Tomcat fighter jet lands at a desert airfield during Operation Desert Shield. The VF-32 Squadron, nicknamed the 'Swordsmen' was based aboard the aircraft carrier USS John F. Kennedy (CV-67), which during the Gulf War was operating in the Red Sea, Saudi Arabia.





WAR_{in}
FOCUS
BATTLE DEBRIS

Taken: September, 1940

The portion of a destroyed Dornier bomber lies under guard after the aircraft was brought down over London. September 1940 saw the height of the struggle between the Luftwaffe and the RAF. After the failure to destroy the RAF, the Germans resorted to mostly nighttime bombing raids, which caused huge destruction in Britain's major urban areas.





WAR_{in} **FOCUS**

BUILDING BRIDGES

Taken: 11 February, 2006

Members of the Indian Army's engineering corps put their backs into repairs to a bridge destroyed in the 2005 Kashmir earthquake. The Kaman Bridge is along the border between Pakistan and India in the disputed region. The disaster left over 80,000 people dead, with thousands wounded and left homeless.



TIMELINE OF THE...

FRANCO-PRUSSIAN WAR

The Prussian-led North German Confederation decisively defeats Napoleon III's France, which leads to German unification and the destruction of the Second French Empire

BATTLE OF WISSEMBOURG 01

The first battle of the war takes place on the Franco-German border when three corps of Prussian-led forces of the North German Confederation attack a small French garrison at Wissembourg. The French fight well but their commander, General Abel Douay, is killed and their defeat enables the Germans to invade France.

1870

14-19 July 1870

4 August 1870

6 August 1870



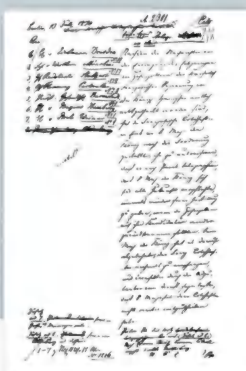
Bismarck pictured in a Prussian cuirassier uniform in 1870

PRUSSIAN AMBITIONS

Prussian Chancellor Otto von Bismarck wishes to incorporate four southern German states into a confederation dominated by Prussia. Emperor Napoleon III of France does not want to strengthen the power of Prussia, which will upset the balance of power in Europe. Bismarck seeks to weaken France and prepares for war.

THE EMS DISPATCH

Bismarck publicly releases an internal telegram known as the 'Ems Dispatch' between himself and King Wilhelm I of Prussia that details a private meeting with the French ambassador. The telegram is deliberately doctored to insult the French. The result is an overreaction where France mobilises and declares war on Prussia.



This piece of diplomatic trickery leads to the death of hundreds of thousands of people and the birth of a new empire

BATTLE OF SPICHEREN 02

Karl Friedrich von Steinmetz's 1st Army advances west and attacks French positions commanded by Charles Auguste Frossard at Spicheren. The first Prussian attacks are repulsed with rifle fire but German artillery eventually pummels the French into retreat.

Prussian forces advance under fire at Spicheren





Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia views the corpse of the fallen General Abel Douay

French infantrymen grimly fight on among the battlefield carnage of Mars-La-Tour



BATTLE OF MARS-LA-TOUR 04

A Prussian corps encounters the entire French Army of the Rhine but fights them to an inconclusive result. Neither side achieve tactical success but the Prussians win a strategic victory when the French withdraw at night.



BATTLE OF GRAVELOTTE 05

Two German armies again encounter the French Army of the Rhine - this time at Gravelotte. Over 300,000 men fight a gruelling battle with enormous combined casualties of 32,000 soldiers. The French army withdraws into the fortress of Metz, which prevents them from retreating to Verdun.

The charge of the 9th Lauenburg Rifle Battalion

6 August 1870

16 August 1870

18 August 1870

19 August-27 October 1870



BATTLE OF WORTH 03

Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm of Prussia commands a decisive victory against Marshal Patrice de MacMahon. Over 135,000 men fight a huge battle that is won by German weight of numbers and forces the French to retreat on the same day as their defeat at Spicheren.

The 9th Cuirassier Regiment from French I Corps becomes trapped by Prussian fire in the village of Morsbronn-les-Bains

SIEGE OF METZ 06

The French Army of the Rhine is surrounded at Metz by the North German Confederation. The fortress is strong so the Germans starve their besieged opponents. Attempted French breakouts are defeated and the entire army is forced to surrender after two months.



A photograph of one of Metz's forts, which is occupied by the Germans after the French surrender

All images: Wiki / PD / CC unless otherwise stated



“FOR A WAR THAT LASTS JUST OVER SIX MONTHS THE CASUALTIES ARE HORRENDOUS”

1-2 September 1870

BATTLE OF SEDAN 07

The French Army of Châlons commanded by Marshal MacMahon attempts to relieve the Siege of Metz but is encircled and defeated by the Germans at Sedan. 104,000 Frenchmen are captured including MacMahon and, most disastrously, Napoleon III himself. The emperor abdicates, which ends the Second French Empire but his government fights on.

Napoleon III converses with Bismarck after being captured at Sedan



19 September 1870 - 28 January 1871

SIEGE OF PARIS 08

Paris is besieged for months by German forces and defended by a hastily assembled garrison, although the defences are formidable. As at Metz, the Germans starve the city but the French refuse to capitulate. The Germans eventually bombard Paris over three weeks with 12,000 shells, which reduces morale. The city surrenders on 28 January 1871 with huge losses including approximately 47,000 civilian casualties.



Buildings lie in ruins in the Parisian suburb of Saint Cloud after the third French sortie to relieve the city at the Battle of Châtillon

3-19 January 1871

RELIEF ATTEMPTS

French forces attempt to relieve the Siege of Paris but they are twice defeated at the Battles of Bapaume and St Quentin. After these failures no more attempts are made by the French Army to relieve the city.

Prussian soldiers assemble in the town square of St Quentin. The battle that occurs there is the last engagement of the war between French and German forces



© Alamy



A French propaganda illustration depicts a heartbroken 'mother' of France having her 'children' of Alsace and Lorraine being forcibly taken away by a German

TREATY OF FRANKFURT

The new French Third Republic signs a controversial peace treaty that cedes Alsace-Lorraine to Germany. France bitterly resents this significant annexation of home territory and the re-conquest of the region becomes a key motive for its future involvement in WWI.



ARMISTICE OF VERSAILLES

The war is officially ended at Versailles when the French conditionally surrender to the Germans. For a war that lasts just over six months the casualties are horrendous. The Germans suffer casualties of 144,600, including 44,700 dead but the French lose around 756,200 people. This includes approximately 139,000 dead and 474,400 captured.

Prussian troops conduct a victory parade in Paris, 17 February 1871

28 January 1871

10 May 1871

18 January 1871

18 March-28 May 1871

UNIFICATION OF GERMANY 09

Towards the end of the Siege of Paris, Germany is finally united at the Palace of Versailles. Wilhelm I is proclaimed as emperor of a new German Empire in the presence of Bismarck and delegations from German field regiments. The event marks the beginning of the 'Second Reich'.



The German Empire is proclaimed in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles



PARIS COMMUNE 10

In the wake of France's defeat a radical, revolutionary government known as the 'Commune' is established in Paris. It refuses to accept the authority of the French national government and rules Paris for two months. The Commune is bloodily suppressed by the National Guard with tens of thousands being killed.

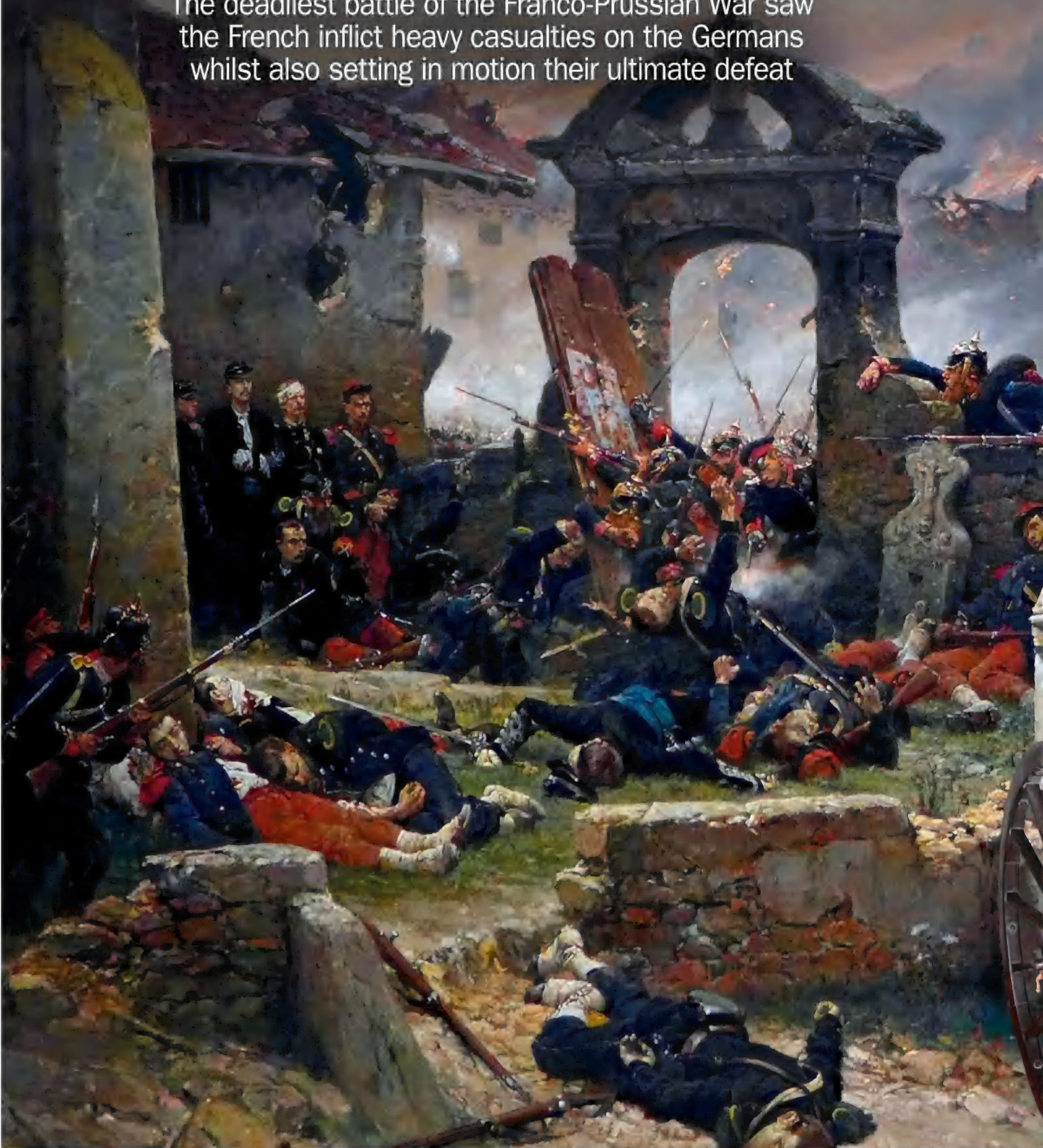
National Guardsmen stand on a captured Commune barricade. Karl Marx calls the revolutionaries "the glorious harbinger of a new society"

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Frontline

GRAVELOTTE 1870

The deadliest battle of the Franco-Prussian War saw the French inflict heavy casualties on the Germans whilst also setting in motion their ultimate defeat



The Franco-Prussian War is largely remembered for its political impact rather than the military campaign that occurred during 1870-71.

Nevertheless, the war was a short but bloody event that resulted in the deaths of over 180,000 soldiers, the vast majority of whom were French. Although Napoleon III's capture at the Battle of Sedan became the most famous engagement it was actually a hotly contested clash at Gravelotte a few weeks before that was the most bloody. Described by historian Philipp Elliot-Wright as "the hardest-fought of all the battles of the Franco-Prussian War", Gravelotte is little-known today but it demonstrated the fighting determination of the French and almost sent the North German Confederation into retreat.

Split armies

In weeks preceding Gravelotte, Prussian-led armies of the North German Confederation had been advancing across northeastern France and won continual victories against the French. This run of success began at the

Battle of Wissembourg on 4 August 1870 and included other triumphs, such as a decisive clash at Wörth on 6 August. The French Army became divided between Marshal Patrice de MacMahon's Army of Châlons and the Army of the Rhine commanded by Marshal François Achille Bazaine.

The latter was ordered to re-join MacMahon from the formidable fortress at Metz via Verdun but Bazaine moved slowly. The Army of the Rhine consequently encountered the German 2nd Army at the Battle of Mars-La-Tour on 16 August where both sides claimed a victory after a bloody clash. The French suffered over 17,000 casualties and Bazaine's troops retreated in bad weather towards Verdun. They were pursued by the 1st and 2nd Armies that were nominally led by King Wilhelm I of Prussia but were actually largely commanded by Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke.

At this stage the Germans outnumbered the French with 188,332 troops and 732 guns compared to 112,800 soldiers and 520 guns. Before 17 August, the fighting between Von Moltke and Bazaine was characterised by

German offensives and French counter-attacks but both sides refrained from clashes on that day. Each used their time to prepare for a large battle with the Germans collecting troops on the west bank of the River Moselle while the French deployed their forces on heights west of Metz. This high ground covered areas around Lorraine settlements that included the village of Gravelotte, which was located 15 kilometres from Metz. The French line was deployed in positions that extended for approximately 13 kilometres from Roncourt, Saint-Privat-la-Montagne and Amanvillers in the north to Gravelotte and Rozérieulles to the south. Bazaine's men established themselves in defensive positions that included hedges, walls, farmhouses and village homes.

A determined defence

On 18 August 1870, the Germans restarted their offensive although Von Moltke was unsure of the French positions because enemy movements had not been seen along the main road. Attacking almost blind at midday, the Hessian 25th Infantry Division attempted to

This stylised 1881 painting of the fighting at Saint-Privat earned the artist, Alphonse de Neuville, the Légion d'honneur

A mitrailleuse pictured on display at Morges Castle, Switzerland

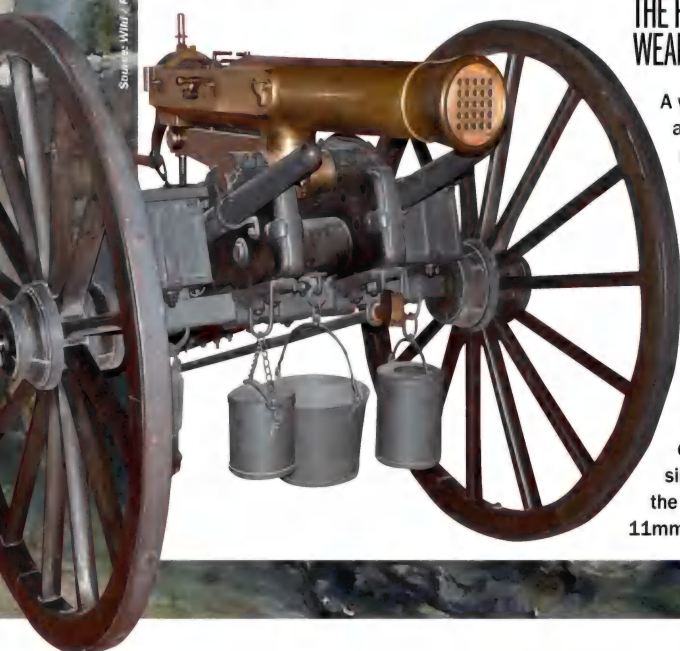
"HELL MACHINE"

THE FRENCH ARMY USED MITRAILLEUSE VOLLEY GUNS AT GRAVELOTTE – A RAPID-FIRING WEAPON THAT INFLECTED HEAVY CASUALTIES AND HAD MEDIEVAL ORIGINS

A volley gun has several barrels that fires a number of shots in quick succession or simultaneously. Although it has similarities to a machine-gun, it does not have automatic loading or fire. Descended from the 14th century ribauldequin, the volley gun developed steadily as the centuries passed until the introduction of the mitrailleuse. Developed by the Belgian Army during the 1850s, the mitrailleuse preceded the invention of the Gatling gun by a decade and fired most of its 37 barrels simultaneously. The French Army used the 1863 'Montigny' model that fired 11mm cartridges from a brass cylinder.

During the Franco-Prussian War, the French used 190 mitrailleuse guns and they were effective at short-medium range against cavalry and infantry charges. At Gravelotte, Bazaine deployed his mitrailleuse in the infantry firing line under the protection of trees. They were able to inflict heavy casualties on the Germans who called them 'Höllenschiff' ('Hell Machines').

Despite their performance, the mitrailleuse were comparatively small in number and the French failed to maximise their effectiveness. They often made the mistake of operating them as proper artillery pieces rather than rapid-firing rifles. After the war they were used to execute captured Communards from the Paris Commune but the mitrailleuse was ultimately replaced by new automatic machine-guns.



encircle the French at Amanvillers but they were met with heavy fire from rifles and volley guns. The German VII Corps of 1st Army tried to take positions on the Mance Ravine but even artillery support could not move the French.

German efforts also became bogged down at Saint-Privat. Prussian infantrymen became trapped by French gunfire as they advanced up the heights until Wilhelm I ordered a renewed advance at 6.00pm. The Prussian infantry and the troops of VII and VIII Corps launched further attacks on Saint-Privat and the Mance Ravine but large parts of 1st Army disengaged from the fighting by 6.30pm.

Prince Friedrich Karl of Prussia observed the faltering German advance and ordered a large artillery bombardment against the French at Saint-Privat. The Germans began to make progress against other French positions from 7.00pm with II Corps from 2nd Army clearing the Mance Ravine. A Prussian division finally captured Saint-Privat an hour later, which had become the centre of the battle. The French suffered heavy casualties there and were forced to withdraw. A counter-attack to retake the village was suggested but the French were almost out of ammunition. Darkness had fallen by 10.00pm and the fighting mostly fizzled out.

Below: French cuirassiers photographed at Metz after the battle

Inset below: François Achille Bazaine was sentenced to death by the Third French Republic after his defeats during the war but he escaped to exile in Spain after his sentence was commuted to life imprisonment

“WITH COMBINED CASUALTIES OF ALMOST 32,500 MEN THIS WAS A BLOODBATH COMPARABLE TO A DAY’S FIGHTING DURING THE NAPOLEONIC WARS”

During the night of 18-19 August, both sides believed they were defeated. The German High Command was concerned about their high casualties while Bazaine had had to retreat from Saint-Privat. A French Guards reserve division was belatedly deployed from but it followed its fellow French units in retreat.

On the morning of 19 August, the results of the battle became clearer. The French had largely fought the Germans to a standstill but the Army of the Rhine was exhausted and Bazaine ordered a retreat to Metz. They became besieged in the huge fortress network and were eventually forced to surrender two months later on 27 October 1870. In this sense the Germans had won the preceding battle because Bazaine’s men became trapped and could no longer link up with MacMahon’s Army of Châlons.

Bitterness from bloodshed

The Germans had suffered severe losses at Gravelotte. Over 20,000 men of 1st and 2nd Armies had been killed, wounded or missing

in action compared to just over 12,000 French casualties. With combined losses of almost 32,500 men this was a bloodbath comparable to a day’s fighting during the Napoleonic Wars, but WWI is probably the best analogy. Both sides were equipped with the latest developments in industrial weaponry with the French making murderous use of their Chassepots. These were bolt-action, breech-loading rifles that were effectively a halfway-house between the famous British Martini-Henry and Lee Enfield firearms. By contrast, the Germans also inflicted heavy casualties on the French with their Krupp field guns. Made from high-quality steel, the guns were superior to the French artillery with their C64 gun in particular outclassing all other pieces with its range, shells, rate of fire and reliability.

This severe bloodshed ultimately influenced the tide of the war. Bazaine’s retreat to Metz and the subsequent siege was not an isolated event because the French attempted to relieve the Army of the Rhine shortly afterwards. MacMahon’s Army of Châlons marched towards the fortress in late August 1870 but on 1-2 September it was annihilated at the Battle of Sedan. The French failure to defeat the Germans on 18 August paved the way for this disaster and the fall of the Second French Empire was confirmed. Alsace-Lorraine was occupied and the carnage of Gravelotte took on a grave symbolism. From 1871 until its reintegration into France in 1918, the village of Gravelotte was geographically notable for being the westernmost settlement of Germany.



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LEADERS & COMMANDERS

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FIELD MARSHAL HELMUTH VON MOLTKE THE ELDER

TACTICAL INNOVATOR AND ARCHITECT OF PRUSSIAN VICTORY
1800-1891 PRUSSIA



Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke the Elder recognised the advantages of rail transport

Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke the Elder brought innovative tactical and strategic thinking, organisational skill and esprit de corps to the Prussian military. He exercised command and control through an adaptation of concepts that were subsequently proven on the battlefield.

An advocate of theories put forward a generation earlier by Prussian General Carl von Clausewitz, Moltke was among the first to recognise the advantages of rail transport in facilitating the movement of large armies and their necessary supplies. He further realised that direct tactical control of multiple substantial formations was virtually impossible. Therefore, he fostered the development of capable subordinates and then depended on them to exercise initiative in the field, issuing general directives rather than inflexible orders. He instituted a revised command system that later served as a model for the modern armies of the 20th century.

Named chief of the Prussian General Staff in 1857, Moltke led his armies to swift victories over Denmark and Austria in 1864 and 1866. During the Franco-Prussian War, he executed a grand strategy that led to the decisive victory at Sedan, the fall of the fortress city of Metz, and the eventual surrender of Paris.



Artist's impression of the Battle of Sedan

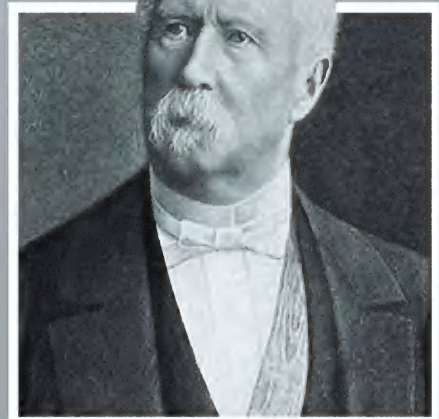
MARSHAL PATRICE DE MACMAHON DEFEATED AT SEDAN; LATER PRESIDENT OF FRANCE

1808-1893 FRANCE

A career officer, Marshal MacMahon led the French army that was encircled and decisively defeated at Sedan, sealing the Prussian victory in the war of 1870-1871. MacMahon was representative of the French military leaders who placed great reliance on the new technology of the breechloading chassepot rifle and the mitrailleuse, an early machine-gun. Decades of French hegemony on the European continent also influenced the high command's perspective on military operations. After France declared war on Prussia, the

organisational response was inept, crippled by indecision. Prior to Sedan, MacMahon led 130,000 troops of the Army of Chalons in an effort to raise the siege of Metz, but a series of defeats ensued as the French were continually outmanoeuvred by von Moltke's Prussian forces. At Sedan, MacMahon was wounded and captured along with Emperor Napoleon III, who accompanied the army in the field. The defeat effectively ended Bonaparte rule in France. Despite the humiliating defeat, MacMahon rose to the French presidency in 1873.

Marshal Patrice de MacMahon led the French army to disastrous defeat at the Battle of Sedan in 1871



PRINCE FRIEDRICH KARL OF PRUSSIA

PRINCE FRIEDRICH KARL LED THE PRUSSIAN ARMY TO VICTORY AT METZ
1828-1885 PRUSSIA

The son of Prince Charles of Prussia, Friedrich Karl was a superb military tactician and a proponent of comprehensive training for his troops. The author of several books on tactics and military discipline, he implemented theories that made his commands elite among Prussian military formations. With the eruption of the Franco-Prussian War, he was given command of the Second Army and proceeded to win a string of victories against the French, particularly the ill-fated Army of the Rhine. He defeated the French at Mars-la-Tour in August 1870, preventing the enemy's escape, and hammered the foe two days later at Gravelotte-St Privat. Subsequently, the Army of the Rhine took shelter in the old fortress city of Metz. Friedrich Karl laid siege to Metz, which fell on 27 October 1870, and



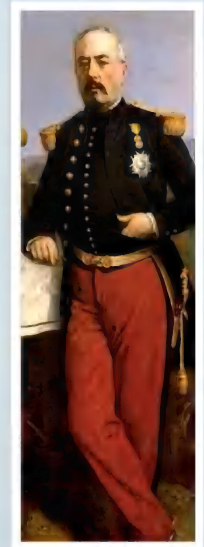
Prince Friedrich Karl led the Prussian Second Army from victory to victory in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871.

140,000 French soldiers marched into captivity. Subsequent victories at Orleans and Le Mans led to his promotion to field marshal.

MARSHAL FRANCOIS ACHILLE BAZAINE

SURRENDERED THE CITY OF METZ TO THE PRUSSIANS
1811-1888 FRANCE

Although he had held every rank in the French Army from fusilier to marshal, and exhibited tremendous gallantry in battle, leading from the front and wounded on numerous occasions, Francois Achille Bazaine is remembered for his ignominious negotiations with the besieging Prussians and surrender of the fortress city of Metz on 27 October 1870, making 140,000 French troops prisoners of war. A Marshal of France since 1863, Bazaine was appointed commander in chief on 10 August, three weeks after France declared war on Prussia, and personally took command of the Army of the Rhine, the left wing of the French Army. His initial thrust at Verdun was blunted four days later at Borny, and he was wounded in the fighting. Within a week, he was defeated again at Mars-la-Tour and Gravelotte-St Privat. He retired to Sedan by 1 September and surrendered the last viable French army there. For his failure, Bazaine was sentenced to death in 1873, later commuted to 20 years in prison. He escaped in August 1874, and died in exile.



Marshal Bazaine was sentenced to death for surrendering the besieged city of Metz without a fight.

CROWN PRINCE FREDERICK

ALTHOUGH HE DETESTED WAR, FREDERICK LED CAPABLY IN BATTLE
1831-1888 PRUSSIA

The father of Kaiser Wilhelm II, who led Germany into global conflict half a century after the Franco-Prussian War, Crown Prince Frederick was averse to war. However, when hostilities with France erupted in 1870, he was given command of the Prussian Third Army, consisting primarily of troops from the allied southern German states. Frederick led his forces to victories at the battles of Wissembourg and Worth and contributed to the thorough defeat of the French at the pivotal Battle of Sedan, as well as the subsequent siege of Paris. Frederick was loved by his troops and was often seen visiting the wounded. He once told French reporters, "I do not like war gentlemen. If I should reign, I would never make it." He did reign as Emperor Frederick III, but for only three months, dying of throat cancer at the age of 56.

A distinguished field commander and father of Kaiser Wilhelm II, the crown prince reigned briefly as Emperor Frederick III

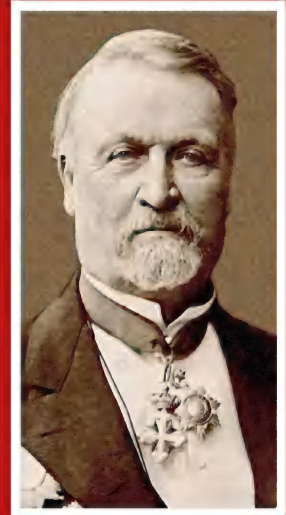


GENERAL EMMANUEL FELIX DE WIMPFEN

Wimpffen was partially blamed for the debacle that befell the French Army at Sedan in 1870.

A FATEFUL DECISION AT SEDAN CONTRIBUTED TO THE FRENCH DEFEAT 1811-1884 FRANCE

After lengthy service in North Africa, de Wimpffen was promoted general following heroic action during the Crimean War and again after the Battle of Magenta during the Second Italian War of Independence in 1859. For the next decade, he served primarily in Algeria. He did not immediately receive a command with the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War, however, an opportunity arose when the commander of the 5th Corps was relieved after the poor performance of his troops. De Wimpffen restored order in the ranks of the 5th Corps just in time to march toward the fighting at Sedan. When Marshal Patrice MacMahon was wounded, immediate control of the Battle of Sedan devolved to General August-Alexandre Ducrot, who ordered a withdrawal. However, de Wimpffen arrived a short time later and rescinded the directive, a decision that ultimately contributed to the disastrous French defeat. De Wimpffen died in Paris after spending much of his later years attempting to justify his actions at Sedan.



SIEGE MENTALITY

With an almost religious reverence for science the French were convinced their greatest minds would lead them to salvation. They were mistaken

It is usually accepted that warfare is a direct stimulus to scientific advancement. Arms races and conflicts act as a spur for scientific exploration, and many inventions that seem essential today – canned food, microwave ovens and digital photography among them – were born out of military necessity.

During the Franco-Prussian War, the French population had unwavering faith in the ability of their greatest minds to deal with the Prussian threat. Their world-leading scientists would find new ways to feed them, arm them and destroy the Prussian invaders.

However, the French scientific community failed to deliver, especially during the siege of Paris. Partly this was due to the speed with which events spiralled out of control. There was no time for a leisurely consideration of ideas and lengthy trials of the more promising ones – matters had reached a critical point almost before anyone knew what was happening.

The failure to defend the city led to defeat and the formation of a German Empire. This included the disputed territory of Alsace-Lorraine, which became a key factor in the outbreak of World War I.

City under siege

France had a thriving scientific community in the 19th century. Paris had hosted the International Exhibition of 1867, where innovative designs in clocks and telegraphs had been displayed (ominously, in retrospect, a German company had showcased a 50-ton cannon).

Just three years later, the best minds in France (many of them based in Paris) had to turn their attention to the looming crisis. It was more than some of them could stand. The two most famous French scientists of the day, Louis Pasteur and Claude Bernard, both left Paris as quickly as they could and did nothing to help the war effort. Pasteur even admitted, "The war sent my brain to grass."

The most obvious challenges facing the city were how to combat the Prussian forces and how to feed the two million or so inhabitants caught up in the siege. The production of milk became as important as the production of gunpowder, but most of the cattle in the city were bullocks, intended for consumption.

The response was a number of efforts to make a synthesised milk substitute. Sugar beet had been used during the Napoleonic Wars as a replacement for sugar cane, but milk proved to be a far more difficult proposition and no suitable substitute was created – the best efforts were safe to consume, but had none of the taste, texture or nutrients of the real thing.

It was a similar story with a new foodstuff, named 'osseine' and made from animal bones. Similar to gelatine, it didn't appear to be nutritious, but it was at least safe to consume and staved off hunger pangs for a while.

Chemical Society

Military innovation was also of paramount interest. Dynamite had been invented some years earlier, but France had been slow to take up this new explosive. By the time the siege was in place, the vital ingredient needed to stabilise nitroglycerin, 'kieselguhr', was not available within the city and a replacement urgently needed to be found.

One of the many committees established in Paris, the Chemical Society, set about tackling this issue. With meetings every day, the problem was quickly solved and within two months dynamite was being manufactured in Paris to the tune of 300kg per day.

It was perhaps the greatest success of the scientific community during the war, and achieved under the most intense pressure imaginable. With much of the research into munitions undertaken under the supervision of Marcellin Berthelot, some significant progress was made. Berthelot, in contrast to Pasteur and Bernard, recognised the need to contribute wherever he could. "This is how I was torn away from my abstract studies," he would later comment, "and I had to concern myself with the manufacture of cannon, gunpowder and explosives."

Berthelot also had some success in revisiting ancient methods of finding nitrates for gunpowder manufacture in saltpetre, but in other areas there simply wasn't enough time to make meaningful contributions.

Mass manufacture of the existing 'mitrailleuse' machine-gun was discussed, but proved infeasible. The overwhelming Prussian superiority in artillery was recognised in a decision by the Chemical Society to sponsor the production of a breech-loading cannon, at a cost of 5,000 francs. The idea that

one such gun would make any difference was quaint at best, but Berthelot quickly proposed that raising money through public subscription could allow them to manufacture 1,500.

There was no time for such ambitious plans to come to fruition, however, as Parisians ate their way through the available food in the city (including forays into the zoo) and moved inevitably on to the starvation stage of the siege. Even truly innovative ideas, like the use of armoured wagons packed with soldiers and referred to as 'mobile redoubts', were not enough to tip the balance. The idea for what would one day be termed armoured cars would need to wait for another war to be realised.

More outlandish ideas (one bright spark submitted a plan to literally hammer the Prussians into submission, by using balloons to lift a giant hammer weighing millions of tons and drop it on the Prussian armies), got no further than fanciful sketches on pieces of paper, and eventually French confidence in their scientific prowess had to bow to Prussian organisation, military hardware and superior deployment of forces.

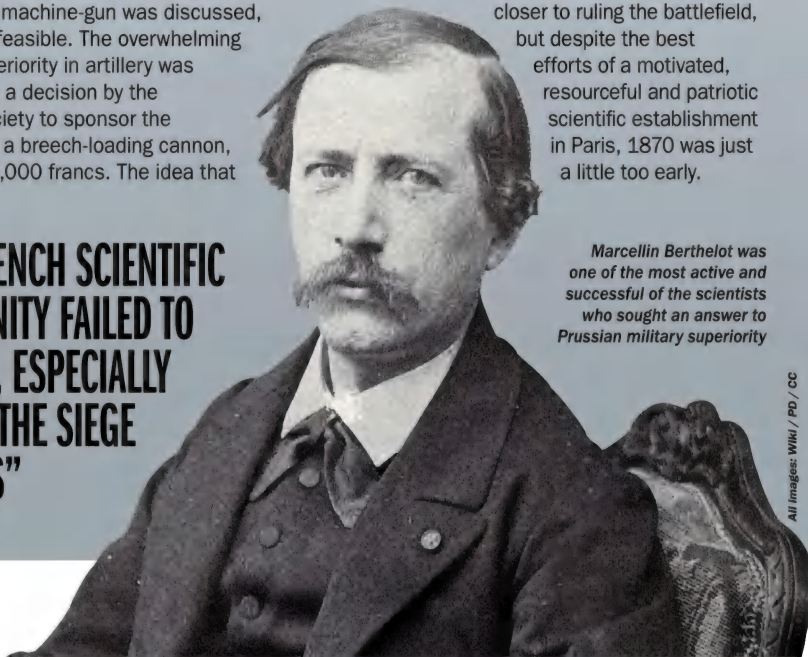
With more time (or more foresight), the deployment of large numbers of machine-guns, breech-loading cannon and 'mobile redoubts' may well have allowed the French to resist the Prussian armies, but given mere months, rather than years, the demands were just too much.

Even the one area where the French could point to a truly radical and original invention, the hot air balloon, proved inconsequential. Apart from some minor use as observation platforms, balloons served mainly as a postal service to the outside world and as a means for a select few to escape the city. Air superiority was a concept that as yet held no importance.

Science would one day come far closer to ruling the battlefield, but despite the best efforts of a motivated, resourceful and patriotic scientific establishment in Paris, 1870 was just a little too early.

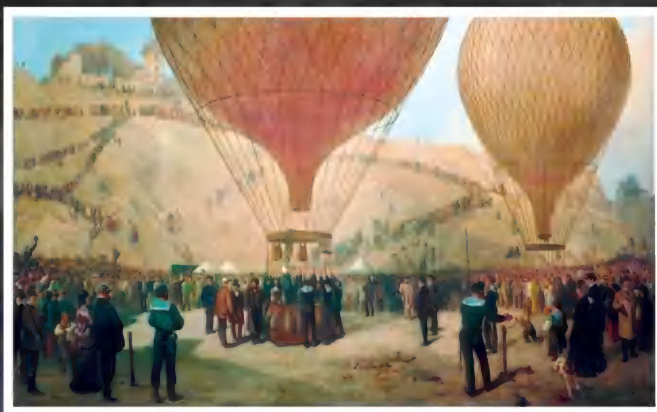
"THE FRENCH SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY FAILED TO DELIVER, ESPECIALLY DURING THE SIEGE OF PARIS"

Marcellin Berthelot was one of the most active and successful of the scientists who sought an answer to Prussian military superiority





350,000 National Guardsmen bolstered the defences of Paris



Minister of the Interior Léon Gambetta is depicted leaving Paris by hydrogen-filled balloon on 7 October 1870



A glamorised depiction of the fighting around Paris, by Jean-Louis-Ernest Meissonier



**SICILY
1943**

THE ASSAULT ON FORTRESS EUROPE

WORDS JAMES HOLLAND



© Getty

A year before the invasion of Normandy, Operation Husky struck the first major blow on Axis soil, with thousands of troops battling against challenging conditions. Here, historian and broadcaster James Holland recounts how the Allies triumphed during this astonishing but often overlooked campaign

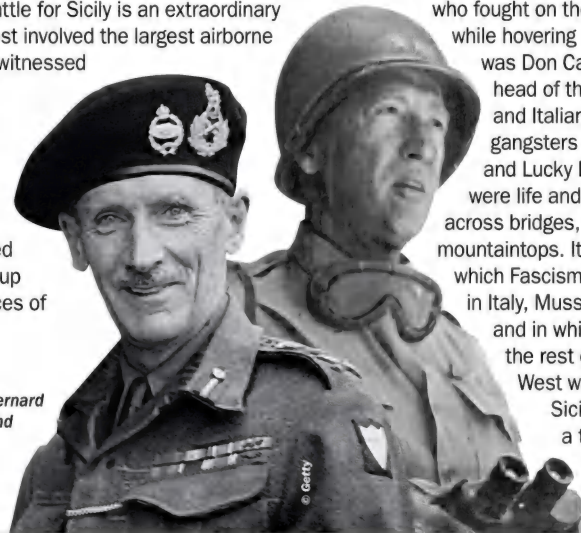
In terms of men landed in a single day, Operation Husky, the Allied assault of Sicily on 10 July 1943, remains the largest amphibious invasion ever mounted in the history of the world. More than 160,000 American, British and Canadian troops were dropped from the sky or came ashore that day, more than on D-Day in Normandy just under a year later, or in any of the island battles in the Pacific. It was a remarkable achievement and all the more so since Britain and America had, just three years earlier, almost no armies to speak of and almost no tanks, guns, trucks and other essential equipment. In many ways, the Battle of Sicily is the moment the Western Allies came of age. It was on Sicily that the British and American coalition began to operate at a war-winning level. Modern warfare by 1943, said General Sir Harold Alexander, commander of all Allied land forces for Sicily, was a correlation of "the three elements we live in: land, air, water. Army, air force and navy must become a brotherhood". At the time, it was only the Western Allies who were bringing these three elements together and it was to bring about a sea change in how they fought. Air power, especially, was a vital part of the pre-invasion operations on and around Sicily and continued to play a critical part throughout the campaign.

The 36-day Battle of Sicily is an extraordinary story. Its conquest involved the largest airborne operations ever witnessed up to that point, daring raids by special forces, the harnessing of the Mafia, attacks across mosquito infested plains, assaults up almost sheer faces of



US paratroopers being transported to the Allied assault on Sicily

rock and scrub, and featured an astonishing array of highly colourful characters, from commanders such as Generals Montgomery and Patton to the German Valentin Hube – nicknamed 'der Mann' – as well as a host of lesser ranked officers and soldiers, such as Lord Tweedsmuir, the son of John Buchan, Philip Mountbatten, later to become the Duke of Edinburgh, England cricketer Hedley Verity; the legendary Luftwaffe pilot 'Mackay' Steinhoff and the kilt and claymore-wearing Ernst-Günther Baade are two fascinating men who fought on the German side, while hovering in the background was Don Calo Vizzini, the head of the Sicilian Mafia, and Italian-American gangsters Vito Genovese and Lucky Luciano. There were life and death struggles across bridges, plains and mountaintops. It was a period in which Fascism was overthrown in Italy, Mussolini was toppled, and in which the pattern for the rest of the war in the West was set. Sicily was, though, a terrible place to fight a battle and especially



Left to right: Field Marshall General Bernard Law Montgomery and General George Patton



Troops from 51st Highland Division unloading stores from landing craft on the opening day of the Allied invasion of Sicily

in the blazing heat of high summer. A Baedeker guide from the 1930s warned that no tourist should consider visiting in the months of July and August, when temperatures were blistering and conditions at their worst – and yet this was precisely when the Sicilian campaign took place. Certainly, it was a brutal campaign in many ways. The violence was extreme, the heat unbearable, the stench of rotting corpses intense and all-pervasive, and the problems of malaria, dysentery and other diseases were a constant plague that affected all trying to fight their way across this island of limited infrastructure, rocky hills, mountains and an all-dominating volcano. Endless dust, dry throats and thirst were constant companions to all those fighting on Sicily.

At the time, the campaign was the biggest battle being fought in the West and was on the front pages of newspapers and headlining news footage across Europe and the United States. The eyes of the West were on this Italian island as were those of Nazi Germany. Today it is largely forgotten about, overtaken in the narrative by the battles for Cassino and more especially by D-Day, Normandy and the war in northwest Europe.

The Sicilian campaign also marked a period of dramatic change in the fortunes and tempo of the Second World War, which marked the end of the Italian participation as an Axis ally, forcing Nazi Germany to considerably extend its active participation on its southern front, as well as witnessing the first major amphibious operation of the war against a defended coastline, and the first coalition operation between the United States and Britain in which both nations fielded

“THE CAMPAIGN WAS THE BIGGEST BATTLE BEING FOUGHT IN THE WEST AND WAS ON THE FRONT PAGES OF NEWSPAPERS AND HEADLINING NEWS”

entire armies each. A major campaign with far-reaching strategic importance, it was also an important lesson learning exercise before Operation Overlord, the Allied invasion of Normandy in June 1944.

The decision by the Allies to invade Sicily was made at the Casablanca Conference in January 1943, a meeting between British and American war leaders to thrash out a strategy to win the war in the West. By this time, they knew they must surely win in North Africa, and although it had been agreed they would attempt a cross-Channel invasion of France the following year, in May 1944, there were very good reasons for invading Sicily: it would mean Allied troops would once more be back on European soil, it would help hustle Italy out of the war (if North Africa did not achieve that strategic goal), and it would further tighten the noose around Nazi Germany. In North Africa and the Mediterranean, considerable forces had been built up and they could not sit back and do nothing until the following May.

Complex deception plans were mounted, with a number of sabotage operations in Greece to help point to a landing there, and

also Operation Mincemeat. Despite all the drama and intrigue of this highly complex operation, which suggested the Allies were going to invade Sardinia and Greece, simple logic pointed to Sicily. Certainly, this was what Mussolini and the Italian war leaders thought, and was also what Field Marshal Albert Kesselring, the German commander-in-chief in the Mediterranean also believed. It was true that Hitler accepted the ruse because it conformed with what he believed were the Allies' intentions and reinforced his paranoia about the vulnerability of the Balkans and especially the Ploesti oilfields in Romania, Germany's only source of real, rather than synthetic, oil. In other words, Mincemeat made little, if any, difference.

That Sicily was the obvious next target was because command of the air over the invasion front was a prerequisite for any amphibious invasion. This meant not only having bombers available but also fighter aircraft too, flying protective high cover. Allied air bases on Malta and in northern Tunisia meant this could be only effectively achieved over Sicily; Sardinia and Greece were simply too far away.

Planning for Husky began immediately after the Casablanca conference, even though the British Eighth and First Armies (which included US II Corps) were still battling through Tunisia. The planning team established itself in Room 141 of the St George's Hotel in Algiers and was known as 'Force 141'. By the time a plan for the assault was finally agreed, it had already gone through eight different variations. The ninth plan was what was accepted, on Easter Day in April 1943.



English troops take off in a Horsa glider plane, for the military offensive in Sicily

GIOVANI

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EMO!



US troops survey the devastation from Allied bombardments



Illustration: Jimmie Hoffmann

A knocked out Tiger tank from 504 Panzer company





The town of Canturipe following the battle



British troops wading through the sea during the Allied invasion of Sicily

Husky was a mind-bogglingly complex operation and drawn up while having absolutely no idea what the enemy reaction might be, and while the commanders were still busy fighting the war in North Africa. This was not like Overlord, when the Allies had a fairly clear picture of what German troops were defending France and where they were based; at the time of planning for Sicily, both German and Italian units were still fighting in Tunisia and would continue to do so until 13 May, a month after the final plans for Husky were submitted. Even then it was still unclear what German units might be sent to Sicily. Italian forces were expected to be weak although they had to be prepared for them to fight harder since they would now be doing so on Italian soil. The Germans, they knew, would fight determinedly and be absolutely no push-over.

The shape of Sicily and the location of airfields and ports was another thorny matter. It was estimated Allied forces would need 6,000 tons of supplies per day but the biggest port, Messina, which could handle 2,500 tons a day, was the most heavily defended and furthest away. Palermo could handle 2,000 tons a day but was in the northwest, while Catania could manage 2,000 tons but was half-way up the east coast. The airfields were in the centre of the island on the Catania Plain or in the far west or southeast, so at opposite ends of the island. Really, the Allies needed to swarm the entire island but that wasn't ever going to be possible.

Air power, however, was viewed as absolutely vital and Air Chief Marshal Tedder, the commander of Allied Air Forces in the Mediterranean, wanted troops to swiftly capture the airfields on the west, south and southeast all at once. On the other hand, the Army wanted to land on as narrow a front as possible and quickly build up supplies from

“SECOND GUESSING THE GERMAN AND ITALIAN DEFENCES AND THE REACTION TO AN INVASION WAS PART OF THE PLANNING PROCESS”

there. In other words, the differing Allied forces had entirely contradictory requirements. It was a conundrum that had to be solved.

In the end, a compromise was agreed. The British would land on the southeast coast and head straight to the ports of Syracuse, Augusta and then Catania and from there on to Messina as quickly as possible. Landing on the eastern side made more sense because Messina – and the supply route for the Axis forces from mainland Italy – lay on the northeastern side of the island. The Canadians would land on the southeast tip, while the Americans would land on the central southern stretch around Gela. It meant the airfields there and on the southeast could be captured swiftly, but not those in the west. Air power alone would have to deal with those.

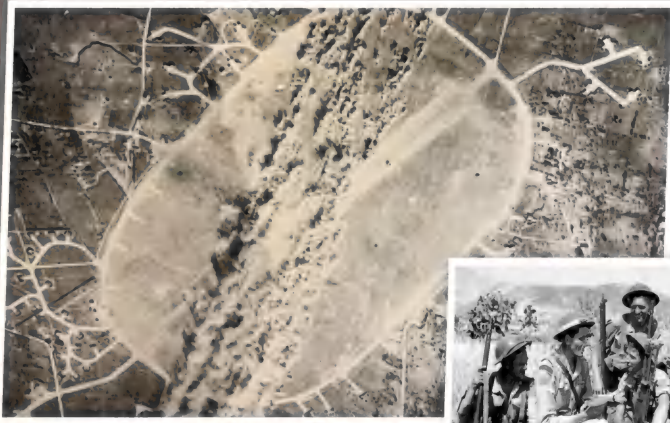
Second guessing the German and Italian defences and the reaction to an invasion was part of the planning process. The single most important factor at this stage of the war was to ensure the landings were successful – or rather, that they did not fail. There could be no reverses. Not failing trumped every other factor. It also meant that General Alexander agreed with Montgomery to land as many troops as possible to ensure a bridgehead was quickly established and no effective attempt to push them back into the sea could be mounted.

That too, however, involved even more compromises, because for all the very impressive build-up of troops and supplies in the Mediterranean, there was still a limit to how much shipping and landing craft were available. Large numbers of troops could only be landed at the expense of large numbers of vehicles – the kind of vehicles that would then transport troops quickly up to Catania and beyond.

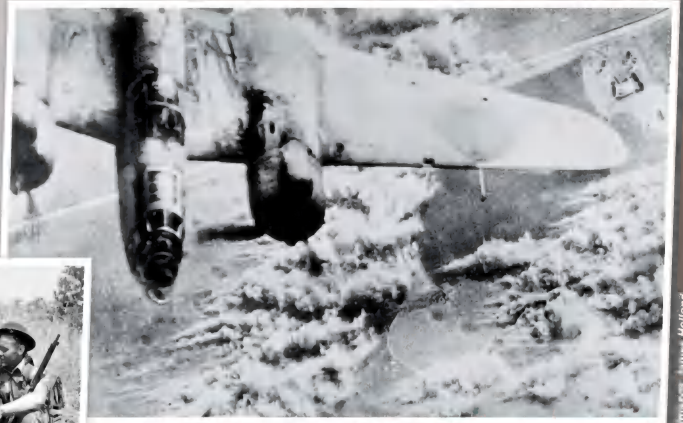
It was this decision that lay at the route of the subsequent slow advance inland. As events turned out, the British landings were easier than had been feared but then the troops had to march north on foot until transport could arrive in numbers over the following days. By that time, the Germans on Sicily had been reinforced, had regained their balance and resistance was, as a result, considerably stiffer. Consequently, front-loading the landings with troops was the wrong decision but only with hindsight. At the time, the very real jeopardy surrounding the operation and the risk of failure outweighed the necessity to move north towards Catania and Messina quickly.

It is also this perceived slowness of advance that has clouded the Allied effort in Sicily ever since. At the end of the campaign, nearly 40,000 German troops managed to successfully escape across the Straits on Messina and live to fight another day. This, too, has prompted considerable criticism and especially of Montgomery, the commander of Eighth Army and in charge of the British effort up the east coast.

Such criticism, however, has been badly misplaced. A very quick tour of the island and its myriad hilltop towns, wide, open valleys and narrow, winding roads is enough to make any modern traveller marvel that the island was cleared of Axis troops in a mere 38 days. Throughout the campaign, the sun beat down



The carpet bombing of Castelvetrano



A Martin Baltimore flies over retreating German forces heading for Messina



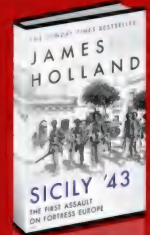
Soldiers enjoy a well-earned break during the Allied invasion



US troops on patrol in the streets of the harbour city of Messina

SICILY '43

In his latest book, James Holland has applied his own extensive studies of the battlefield and over three decades of research to tell the story of the immense Operation HUSKY. Sicily '43 is on sale 3 September and available from all good book shops and online retailers



with temperatures reaching as much as 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit). The dirt roads kicked up dust that could be seen for miles and which stuck in the throat and made men parched with thirst. Water was not safe to drink and water supply was a constant problem that troubled both sides. British troops caught in the Plain of Catania faced Germans dug in along the southern slopes of Etna and both sides lost more men to malaria than they did to bullet, mortar or artillery shell.

Inland, away from the beaches and the Plain of Catania, the island was rocky, mountainous and an extremely difficult place in which to move and especially so without being seen. The Germans, as they fell back, did so by taking one town after another. Because the only roads led from one summit to the next up winding, hairpin tracks, the Allies had little choice but to prise the defenders one town and hilltop at a time. From the summit of each, the next could be seen, and the next after that. Assoro, Agira, Regalbuto, Troina and Centuripe – these ancient hill-top towns saw one Herculean struggle after another, in which the Allies were forced to literally inch their way forward yard by yard against an enemy who made each stand on land of his choosing and inevitably with the all-important advantage of

“THE ALLIES HAD LITTLE CHOICE BUT TO PRISE THE DEFENDERS ONE TOWN AND HILLTOP AT A TIME”

height from which the advancing Allies could be seen. While it was left to the Allied infantry to doggedly plough on, their only solace was the fire support they received from the air but especially from the artillery, who pounded the Germans in their positions – invariably the hilltop towns. Each was pummelled into rubble, homes destroyed and the civilians killed, wounded or turned into refugees. Meanwhile, the Germans were struggling with ever-weakening air support and supply shortages, and declining morale as it became increasingly clear the island was lost. The battle being fought was one of buying time.

The Allies have also been criticised for allowing 39,569 Germans and 62,000 Italians escape. However, the history of the war shows that evacuations were generally pretty successful. At Dunkirk, 338,000 Allied troops escape; 42,000 out of 46,000 British troops deployed were evacuated from Greece.

Nearly 19,000 of the 32,000 Allied troops on Crete were also evacuated. At the end of the war, more than two million Germans were successfully evacuated from East Prussia and Danzig at a time when the Red Army was bearing down upon them. None of these evacuations took place at such a short crossing point as the Straits of Messina, which was little more than a mile wide, nor at a spot that was more densely defended: there were 333 anti-aircraft guns either side of the straits (compared with 135 along the Normandy coast line the following summer). It was literally impossible to stop them and their escape made almost no difference to the subsequent Italian campaign that followed. Furthermore, of the nearly 40,000 Germans that escaped, less than 30,000 were fighting troops, barely two divisions and the each of the four divisions that had fought on Sicily had been appallingly mauled. Within a matter of months there would be 18 divisions fighting in Italy and some 24 by the following spring of 1944; those that escaped Sicily were hardly a decisive number.

Above all, Sicily '43 was an epic of human drama of both combatants and civilians alike. For all those who fought, died and survived this bitter and bloody battle, it deserves to be far better known and understood today.

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Keith Burns is an award-winning aviation artist and commercial illustrator. He has illustrated comics for the past decade, with Johnny Red being the most recent. In 2012 he joined the Guild of Aviation Artists, and in 2015 he won the Messier Dawty award for best acrylic painting in show. In 2016 he was made a full member of the Guild, had his first solo exhibition at the RAF Club in London, and won Aviation Painting of the Year.



CONVOY ATTACK: Spotted - Atlantic Convoy Condor Luftwaffe Fw 200 Attack
BELL001PZT



CONVOY DUTY:
Arctic Convoy Luftwaffe Ju 88 Attack
BELL003PZT



BEAUFIGHTER - LONG RUN HOME:
RAF Beaufighters In The North Sea 1945
BELL007PZT



TYPHOON ATTACK:
RAF Typhoon Attacks Wehrmacht King Tiger
BELL009PZT



LANCASTER - WHEN WE ARE BACK:
RAF Lancaster And Crew's Last Mission
BELL010PZT



BUTCHER BIRD DOWN:
RAF Spitfire MkIX vs Luftwaffe
Fw 190 A8 1944
BELL002PZT



Fw 190 - OVER NORMANDY:
Pips Priller Luftwaffe Fw-190
strafing D-day beaches
BELL004PZT



JU 88 ATTACK:
Luftwaffe JU88 Attack
RAF Driffield 1940
BELL005PZT



S-BOAT ATTACK:
Kriegsmarine Schnellboot
In The English Channel
BELL006PZT



MOSQUITO ATTACK:
RAF Mosquitos Attack
German Shipping
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TYPE "BELLICA" IN SEARCH

OPERATION MINCEMEAT

WORDS MIKE HASKEW

A unlikely web of deception featuring the 'Man Who Never Was' helped fool the Nazis in the Mediterranean Theatre

In its 4 June 1943 roll of wartime casualties, *The Times of London* dutifully reported that Major W. Martin, Royal Marines, had died. In itself, the report was rather innocuous, probably eliciting only passing interest from the average reader, whose eye gravitated toward another report that actor Leslie Howard had been killed when the plane he was aboard had been shot down by Luftwaffe fighters over the Bay of Biscay. Martin, however, had supposedly died in similar fashion, and the larger account gave subtle plausibility to the story of the dead major, which was – from start to finish – a work of pure fiction.

Martin's death notice was, in fact, a coda to the elaborate ruse that fooled the Abwehr (German Intelligence) and convinced Hitler that the expected Allied invasion of southern Europe would come in Greece and Sardinia rather than its true location, Sicily. The Major's illusory life, service and unfortunate demise were the fabric of an elaborate hoax, dubbed Operation Mincemeat, hatched by British Naval Intelligence and MI5, the nation's domestic counter-intelligence and security agency. Mincemeat was theoretically based on the Trout Memo, authored ostensibly in 1939 by Rear Admiral John Godfrey, head of Naval Intelligence, and probably ghost written by his capable assistant, Lieutenant Commander Ian Fleming.

The Trout Memo described several possible deceptions that might be employed at critical moments during World War II to deceive the Germans as to Allied intent, providing a welcome advantage against the insidious enemy. One scheme involved planting false documents on a body that might be discovered by the Germans, or sympathetic Spanish authorities, and accepted as genuine, compelling the enemy to respond. With the

buildup of Allied forces in the Mediterranean in preparation for Operation Husky, the invasion of Sicily set for 9 July 1943, the opportunity for deception was at hand.

Rendezvous in Room 13

The evolution of Operation Mincemeat fell primarily to two men, Lieutenant Commander Ewen Montagu, a Cambridge and Harvard-educated attorney during peacetime who represented Naval Intelligence on the famed XX Committee that developed the successful Double Cross system, and Flight Lieutenant Charles Cholmondeley, of the Royal Air Force Intelligence and Security Department, detailed to MI5 and the XX Committee. Cholmondeley had failed the standard eye examination for pilot training but found the adventure he sought in the shadows of Room 13, a dank, stuffy basement beneath the Admiralty building in Whitehall.

Room 13, windowless with walls stained drab brown and yellow from pipe and cigarette smoke, was home to Naval Intelligence Section 17M. Few, besides the handful of officers and clerks working there, even knew of its existence. Nevertheless, Montagu, Cholmondeley and company were to play an integral role in perhaps the most successful deception play of World War II.

The plan developed into that of an unfortunate military courier, who died after his plane crashed off the coast of neutral Spain. The body was to be set adrift from a submarine in the Atlantic Ocean, either to be discovered while afloat or washed up on a Spanish beach. Hopefully, it would be turned over to local authorities, whose Nazi sympathies were well known under Spain's ruler Generalissimo Francisco Franco. Tethered to the corpse with a chain similar to those used by bank couriers, an attaché case would contain sensitive but patently false documents intended for the Spanish, and subsequently the Abwehr, to peruse and accept as genuine. These would hopefully convince the enemy that the Allied invasion of southern Europe would occur far from Sicily.

A cooperative corpse

Montagu and Cholmondeley pursued their task with vigour, searching for a corpse suitable to carry out the mission. Enlisting the aid of a well-known pathologist, Sir Bernard Spilsbury, the pair scoured morgues across London. There were specific requirements. The

unfortunate individual had to appear to have died of hypothermia or drowning and to have been floating in the ocean for several days. Further, a cadaver with no next of kin was required since it would certainly be difficult to obtain permission to use a loved one's body in a clandestine operation, details of which could not be disclosed.

After an extensive search, the agents finally came upon a likely candidate. Glyndwr Michael, a 34-year-old Welsh drifter, had been found clinging to life in a warehouse in King's Cross on a cold winter evening and transported to St Pancras Hospital. Either wishing to commit suicide or driven by hunger, Michael had ingested a crust of bread smeared with rat poison. He succumbed within 48 hours. A preliminary death certificate noted, "Phosphorous poisoning. Took rat poison – bid kill himself while of unsound mind."

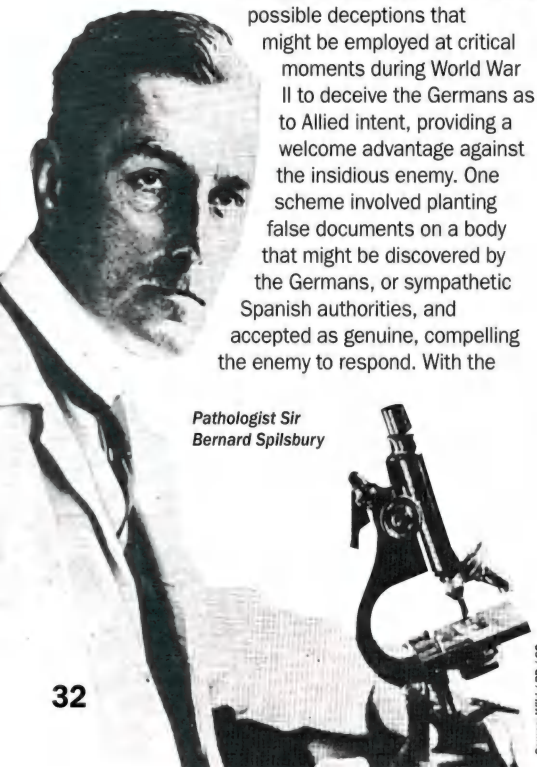
Dr Bentley Purchase, the cooperative coroner for the Northern District of London, examined Michael's remains at Hackney Mortuary and alerted Montagu and Cholmondeley on 28 January 1943. Purchase noted that the corpse could be refrigerated at a temperature just low enough for preservation but not to freeze and cause noticeable tissue damage, but it could last only three months in this state.

Conveniently, Michael's father was found to have died years earlier, and his mother had also passed away. With no immediate family members involved, Dr Purchase expedited the corpse's transfer to MI5.

The mysterious Major Martin

Enlisting the support of other Section 17M personnel, Montagu and Cholmondeley conjured up the life and times of Major Martin, providing the fictitious officer with the accoutrements of an otherwise ordinary existence. Great attention to detail guided the effort. The Germans had to be absolutely convinced that the officer and the documents he carried were legitimate.

The name William Martin was chosen because it matched several potential candidates for the job on the Royal Marines roster, and this arm of service made dressing the body easier. Rather than a tailored naval or army uniform, Royal Marines typically wore battledress, readily available in appropriate sizes. Since standard-issue underwear was in short supply, non-regulation woollen underwear once owned by the deceased Herbert Fisher, warden of



Pathologist Sir
Bernard Spilsbury

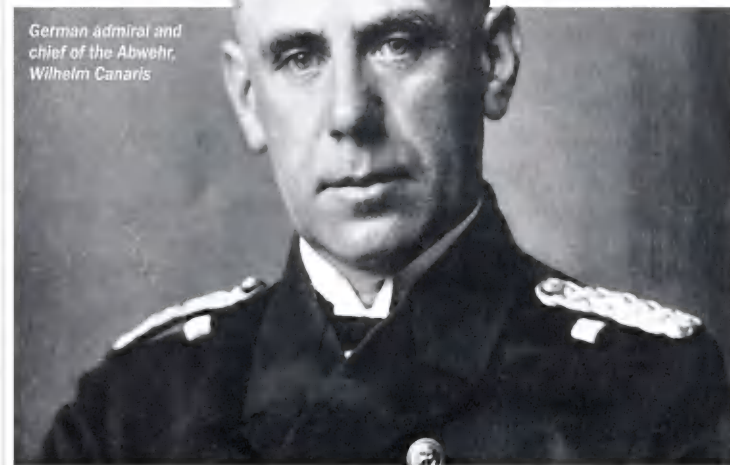
Source: WIKI / PD / CC



A scene from 1956
British espionage
thriller *The Man Who
Never Was*

© Alamy

The submarine HMS Seraph, under Lieutenant Bill Jewell, delivered the body of Major Martin off the coast of Spain



German admiral and chief of the Abwehr, Wilhelm Canaris

New College, Oxford, was utilised. The ranks of captain and acting major were assigned, indicating a level appropriate for such courier service but not so high that the officer should have been known to the Germans. Since Martin was a supposed Royal Marine, any inquiries regarding his death would be routed through the Admiralty, making them easier to intercept.

A bevy of personal effects was manufactured or gathered for placement in the uniform pockets. Among these were a letter from Martin's fictitious father, a bank overdraft notice in excess of £79, and a note from the family's attorney. Other items included a receipt for shirts from Gieves of London, theatre ticket stubs, a statement for four nights at the Naval and Military Club, cigarettes, matches, stamps, a pencil, a Bond Street jewellery store's statement for an engagement ring at just over £53, two love letters from a supposed fiancée named 'Pam', and a photograph of the lucky girl, actually an image of an MI5 secretary named Nancy Jean Leslie. A silver cross and St Christopher medallion would hopefully reinforce the notion that Martin was Roman Catholic, discouraging any detailed Spanish post-mortem out of respect for the dead.

When photographs of the corpse proved unusable for identity cards, Captain Ronnie Reed, who bore some resemblance to Major Martin, posed in his stead. To make the cards appear genuine, they were noted as replacements for lost originals, and for three weeks Montagu walked about Room 13 rubbing them on his trouser leg to achieve the necessary worn look. For several days, Cholmondeley donned the Royal Marine uniform to provide a used appearance.

Contents for the courier

The contents of the attaché case Martin carried were meticulously manufactured to deceive. To preserve the aura of secrecy, the primary document was a model of understatement. A letter from Lieutenant General Sir Archibald Nye, vice chief of the Imperial General Staff, to General Sir Harold Alexander, commander of the Allied 18th Army in North Africa, struck a personal tone and then dealt with mundane activities such as the controversial award to British soldiers of the US Purple Heart decoration for wounds in action under American command and the appointment of a new commander for the Guards Brigade.

The letter then took a subtle strategic turn identifying the objective of Operation Husky as Greece. It read in part, "We have recent information that the Boche have been reinforcing and strengthening their defences in Greece and Crete and C.I.G.S. (Chief of the Imperial General Staff) felt that our forces for the assault were insufficient. It was agreed by the Chiefs of Staff that the 5th Division should be reinforced by one Brigade Group for the assault on the beach south of CAPE ARAXOS and that a similar reinforcement should be made for the 56th Division at KALAMATA."

In addition, a letter from Vice Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, chief of Combined Operations, to Admiral of the Fleet Sir Andrew Cunningham, Mediterranean fleet commander, introduced Martin as an amphibious warfare specialist on loan until Operation Husky was completed. A slight joke referring to sardines was included in this letter, enticing the Germans to consider it a reference to Sardinia as another target. Before the letter was folded,

a lone black eyelash was placed inside to perhaps confirm whether the envelope had been opened and the contents read if and when the documents were returned by Spanish authorities to the British government.

A copy of the official brochure on combined operations with a note asking Mediterranean Theatre commander General Dwight D. Eisenhower to write a foreword for its US edition was also in the case.

Mincemeat in motion

The southwestern coast of Spain, near the port city of Huelva was chosen for Martin's insertion. The submarine HMS Seraph, commanded by Lieutenant Norman 'Bill' Jewell, was assigned the mission, and he explained to the crew that it would be deploying a meteorological device. Martin's body was packed in 21 pounds of dry ice and placed in an airtight canister labelled "Handle with care: optical instruments" before the ride from the morgue to the port of Greenock in western Scotland. Montagu and Cholmondeley bumped along in the rear of the van. The canister was designed by Charles Fraser-Smith, an inventive member of the Ministry of Supply believed to have inspired the character Q in Fleming's *James Bond* series.

Seraph set sail on 19 April 1943 and reached the Gulf of Cádiz ten days later. As Lieutenant Jewell read Psalm 39 and ordered the submarine's engines full astern to push the body toward shore, the corpse of Glyndwr Michael – alias Major William Martin – was eased into the water before dawn on 30 April.

A few hours later, 23-year-old fisherman José Antonio Rey Maria spotted something floating on the surface. Rowing over, he came face to

Page 2
 Issued in lieu of N° 09650

Surname **MARTIN**

Other Names **WILLIAMS**

Rank (at time of issue) **CAPTAIN, R.M.**
(ACTING MAJOR)

Ship (at time of issue) **H Q**
COMBINED OPERATIONS

Place of Birth **CARDIFF**

Year of Birth **1907**

Issued by *[Signature]*

At

Date **2nd February 1943.**

Page 3.
Navy Form 8.1811
**NAVAL
IDENTITY CARD No. 148228**



Signature of Bearer

W. Martin

Visible distinguishing marks

NIL.

This phony identity card includes a photo of a cooperative officer who bore a resemblance to the corpse



M15 secretary Nancy Jean Leslie supplied this photo posing as Major William Martin's fictitious fiancée 'Pam'

All Images: Wiki / PD / CC

face with the mortal remains of Major Martin, noting the foul odour and ghastly effects of early decomposition. With the assistance of another fisherman, José dragged the corpse ashore.

Spanish soldiers were summoned and the body was taken to Huelva, where doctors performed an abbreviated autopsy, partially due to the influence of local British Vice Consul Francis Haselden, who was informed of the deception and engaged in a series of prearranged messages with London describing the situation with the full expectation that the Germans would intercept these communications. Haselden suggested that the Spanish doctors conclude their examination of the body quickly, and they complied, issuing a death certificate stating that Martin had drowned. On 2 May, the body was buried with military honours in the Nuestra Senora cemetery in Huelva.

Meanwhile, the Spanish retained control of the attaché case, while the Germans were informed of the unfolding series of events. The case was forwarded to Cádiz, where the contents were photographed but the letters remained unopened. It was then taken to the Spanish capital of Madrid, where Abwehr interest piqued. Prodded by requests from Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, head of the Abwehr in Berlin, Spanish authorities agreed to open the envelopes through a painstaking process intended to preserve their original unopened appearance once the contents were finally returned to the British.

On 8 May, photographs of the letters and other items were given to the Abwehr agents in Madrid. One of the most senior among them, Karl-Erich Kuhlenthal, personally

carried the information to Berlin. When the case and contents were returned to the British on 13 May, close examination revealed that fibres within the paper had been folded several times. The telltale eyelash was missing. Both were strong indications that the Germans had possession of the false information after reading the letters. ULTRA intelligence intercepts of Nazi radio messages further indicated that deception had worked. The Germans became distracted with defending against an Allied invasion in the Balkans, with some troops redeployed accordingly. Weeks after the Sicily landings Hitler reportedly remained convinced that the primary Allied thrust would occur in the eastern Mediterranean. Strategically, Mincemeat may also have influenced German operations on the Eastern Front, delaying offensive action in the summer of 1943 as Hitler anticipated a second Mediterranean invasion.

His confidence buoyed by the evidence, Brigadier Leslie Hollis, senior assistant secretary of the War Cabinet Office, cabled Prime Minister Winston Churchill, "Mincemeat swallowed rod, line and sinker by the right people and from the best information they look like acting on it."

Post-mortem for Mincemeat

The tangible impact of Operation Mincemeat on the success of Operation Husky may only be assessed via speculation – such is the nature of clandestine activities. True enough, Sicily was captured after five weeks of fighting, rather than the expected three months. Casualties were also moderate when compared with pre-invasion estimates.

In the wake of Husky, Mussolini was removed from power by the country's Fascist Grand Council. A new government undertook secret negotiations with the Allies, eventually capitulating, breaking with Nazi Germany and finishing World War II on the Allied side.

The story of Operation Mincemeat became the subject of several books, notable among them Montagu's *The Man Who Never Was*, published in 1953 and produced as a feature film three years later. In 2010, author Ben Martin released *Operation Mincemeat*, the definitive account of the episode.

Montague and Cholmondeley were honoured with the Order of the British Empire for their roles in Operation Mincemeat, and for decades the body of Glyndwr Michael lay in repose in a Spanish graveyard beneath an inscription identifying him as William Martin and bearing the Latin phrase "Dulce et Decorum est pro Patria Mori, R.I.P." or "It is sweet and fitting to die for one's country."

In 1998, the British government at long last disclosed the true identity of the body, adding an addendum to the epitaph, "Glyndwr Michael served as Major William Martin, RM."



FURTHER READING

- ✦ *Operation Mincemeat: The True Spy Story that Changed the Course of World War II* by Ben Macintyre
- ✦ *The Man Who Never Was: World War II's Boldest Counterintelligence Operation* by Ewen Montagu
- ✦ *Dead Man Floating: World War II's Oddest Operation*, National Public Radio



OPPOSING FORCES

KINGDOM OF HUNGARY

LEADERS & COMMANDERS

John Hunyadi
John of Capistrano
Michael Szilágyi

TROOPS

64,000

BOATS

200

VS

OTTOMAN EMPIRE

LEADERS & COMMANDERS

Mehmed the Conqueror
Zaganos Pasha

TROOPS

Estimates between
30,000 - 100,000

BOATS

200

Great Battles

SIEGE OF BELGRADE

WORDS ALEKSANDAR PAVLOVIC

Clashes between the cross and crescent have often inspired legends. In the Balkans, few legacies shine greater than that of John Hunyadi and his defence against Sultan Mehmed II, the conqueror who defeated the Byzantines

Belgrade's fall to the Turks in the late-Medieval period was not the question of if but of when. The Ottoman victories against the Serbs in the battles of Maritza in 1371, Kosovo in 1389 and in the remaining Serbian lands in 1439 established them as the leaders in most of the Balkan Peninsula. They controlled vast territory south of the Danube, and regularly crossed the river and plundered the Kingdom of Hungary. These pillages provided a rich harvest. Contemporary Turkish writer Asikpasazade relates that a female slave could be bought for a pair of boots, and boasts that he, although poor, "...bought a beautiful young boy for 100 akçe," which was a very low value of small silver coins.

Belgrade city and fortress was the last Christian bastion defying the Turks on the Danube's right bank. In 1440, it successfully resisted the siege launched by the Sultan Murad II. Even though he besieged the city for months, the Sultan had to retreat with his tail between his legs. But, everyone knew that this victory was only a temporary one, and in 1456 the Turks came back with a vengeance. This time they were led by Murad II's son, Mehmed II, rightfully called the Conqueror. Only three years earlier, the then 21-year-old besieged and captured Constantinople, effectively putting an end to the Eastern Roman Empire. After massive preparations, the Conqueror came beneath the city walls leading a convoy consisting of the janissaries, sipahis (Muslim nobles), Christian vassals, companies of fighters from Persia and Egypt,

Tatars, Turkmen, and more. The troops were followed by horses, mules, oxen and camels carrying small ships for the siege from the river, besieging cannons and other devices for destroying the city walls. To eye witnesses, who described the site of the army gathered beneath Belgrade walls like an "earth covered by clouds," Mehmed II appeared invincible; he was mighty, he could rely on resources from a vast, centralised empire and he was eager to avenge his father by capturing Belgrade.

Local Christians, mainly Hungarians and Serbs, pinned their hopes to John (Janos) Hunyadi, the most influential Hungarian noble in the Southern lands and the fiercest enemy of the Turks. In the 1440s and early 1450s, he had launched repeated surprise attacks on the Turks throughout Serbia and Wallachia, and occasionally even defeated them on the open field. This earned him respect and popularity, and the fame that surpassed him. Arguably, oral songs celebrating his deeds were already circulating during his lifetime, and he remained the great hero of the pan-Balkan epic ever since, called variably Sibinyanin Janko in Serbian epic poetry, Ion of Hunedoara by the Romanians, Jansekula by the Bulgarians and Macedonians, and Ugrin Janko by other Slavs. The Greeks appropriated him under the name of Byzantium, and his contemporary, Byzantine historian Dukas, compared him to the Ancient Greek heroes Achilles and Hector. Nevertheless, individual bravery of a single leader and a handful of nobles could only have limited results. After Christian defeats in the 1444 Battle of Varna

'The Heroism Of Titusz Duşovics' by Alexander von Wagner, 1859, depicts the apocryphal seizure of the Ottoman banner by one of Belgrade's defenders

Source: Wiki / PD / CC

BELGRADE, SERBIA JULY 4TH - 22ND 1456



Above: John of Capistrano leads the Christian forces in the siege of Belgrade

and 1448 Battle of Kosovo, it was clear only a vast coalition of Christian forces could be a match for the Ottoman Empire. Yet, even in the face of this constant and imminent threat, Christian nobility remained disunited and immersed in petty disputes.

Words can sometimes be more effective than swords. Pope Callixtus III knew that well when he dispatched his cardinal, Juan Carvajal, known as "a Peter in spirit, a Caesar in courage," on a vast diplomatic mission with the aim of inspiring a Crusade. Before settling at the Hungarian court, Carvajal visited Venice and the Holy Roman Emperor Frederick III, sought help from Sigismund

of Austria, the Duke of Milan, King of Aragon, Duke of Burgundy, Albanian leader Skanderbeg, and assorted German nobles.

Equally important were the efforts of a Franciscan prior, John of Capistrano. Even though he was 70, Capistrano was a brilliant preacher whose fiery speeches attracted masses of commoners, such as students, various craftsmen, unemployed people, monks, even Orthodox Christians and Jews (remarkable given his role in inspiring pogroms), to the Crusade against the Turks, effectively making him the leader of the "holy war". For instance, upon hearing news of his impending arrival, so many people gathered in Apatin (in the modern Serbian province of Vojvodina) that its Archbishop wrote a desperate plea to Capistrano to come as soon as possible as there was a risk of famine. These Christian masses eventually gathered in Zemun, on the bank of the Danube, just a mile or so upstream from Belgrade. Yet, despite their numbers, their role was modest at best. Not only were they poorly equipped and inexperienced, but Belgrade defenders could only accommodate a limited number of fighters within the city's gates. Even if we accept the unreliable figures of 50,000 Crusaders, probably no more than 10,000 people actually took part in the battle both in and out of the city walls. Correspondingly, even though the Pope and



John Hunyadi depicted in a hand-coloured woodcut from Johannes de Thurocz's 15th-century 'Chronica Hungarorum' (Hungarian Chronicle)



John of Capistrano preaches against frivolity in this painting, circa 1465-1475



Mehmed II by Venetian painter Gentile Bellini, 1480. Bellini visited Mehmed's court at Constantinople and the Sultan may have sat for him

Carvajal managed to gather a sizeable papal fleet and dispatch it to Turkish waters, their efforts remained fruitless for the most part. The vast majority of the Hungarian nobles stayed at home, uninterested in the events. What is more, the King himself left Buda for Vienna, leaving their border and its defenders to their own fate. In the days before the siege started, Carvajal wrote to Capistrano with disappointment: "I have said and proposed many things, but to no effect." It was the co-operation between Hunyadi, Carvajal and Capistrano that would decide the outcome of the battle.

With the arrival of the first Ottoman units, who plundered the region in June, Belgrade was besieged from all sides except from the river. Capistrano arrived with the first Crusaders on 2 July, at the same time as Mehmed II, while Hunyadi arrived a week or so later. As it appears, it took him more time to gather troops and prepare ships and vessels for the battle on the Danube. For ten days straight, Turkish cannons bombed the city, causing considerable damage, especially to the outer walls and the Lower City. Signs of demolition were everywhere and the defenders were desperate, while the Turks were gradually filling the ditch beneath the city walls with wood, stone and other material, preparing for the janissaries' final assault.

Turkish ships surrounded Belgrade. They were tied together with a chain just above the confluence of the Danube with the Sava River, to prevent any fresh supplies and reinforcements for the defenders. Here it appears the young Sultan made a gross error of judgement. He rejected the proposal of his right-hand man Karadza, one of his army commanders, to cross the river and occupy Zemun in order to prevent the arrival of the Hungarian army from that side. It seems that the Sultan had full confidence in his fleet, which would prove to be fatal.

"AS LIONS AGAINST THEIR PREY, THEY RUSHED TO THE ENEMY"

Hunyadi finally arrived leading a fleet, and on 14 July focused all his effort on breaking the river blockade. Using the power of the Danube's current, Hunyadi's flotilla successfully broke the chains and engaged in close combat with the Turkish ships. His experienced men, Serbian and Hungarian *šajkaši* (river flotilla troops), used small vessels and knew the area well. They were skilful and knew the Danube, enabling them to manoeuvre with greater ease than their Turkish counterparts. According to a prearranged plan, once they broke the

blockade, the vessels from the Belgrade fortress attacked the Turks from the back and caused much damage. This breakage of the river blockade proved decisive. Thousands of men came to aid, bringing arms, cannons, guns and gunpowder, as well as much-needed food to the defenders. "Food was as abundant as the rain," wrote one witness. Fighting morale was also raised when Hunyadi came with the captured Turkish flags and raised them proudly on the city walls.

In the next seven days, the Turks continued with the siege; bombardment and attacks gaining even greater ferocity, preparing for the final attack. Finally, as the sun set on 21 July, the Sultan ordered a general assault, led by his janissaries. "As lions against their prey, they rushed to the enemy," one source claimed. The defenders fought vigorously, but the already filled ditch and half-broken walls and towers of the Lower City proved an insufficient obstacle. A critical moment came when some 600 to 700 janissaries entered the Lower City and rushed to the bridge leading to the Upper City. Even Belgrade commander Michael Szilagyi was said to believe that the battle was lost, and used a secret passage to reach a prearranged ship that would take him across the river to safety. But Hunyadi, as it seems, had a plan. He allowed these first troops to enter the city walls, and then brought woods,

RED BLOOD AND THE WHITE KNIGHT

Belgrade was the key to the Danube and to the Kingdom of Hungary, and the fight for it was bitter to the end

RUMELI TROOPS

The units of the Rumeli beylerbey Karadza were situated along the Danube embankment. Rumeli - meaning Roman, from the Eastern Roman or Byzantine Empire - referred to men recruited from Ottoman territory in Europe.

SIPAHIS

SIEGE CANNONS

The biggest cannons were placed on three sides from the land, targeting the strategically most important parts of the city, while smaller cannons of various strength and size were placed between them. All cannons were dug in and each had a rampart to protect both the gun and its crew.

HUNGARIAN DEFENDERS

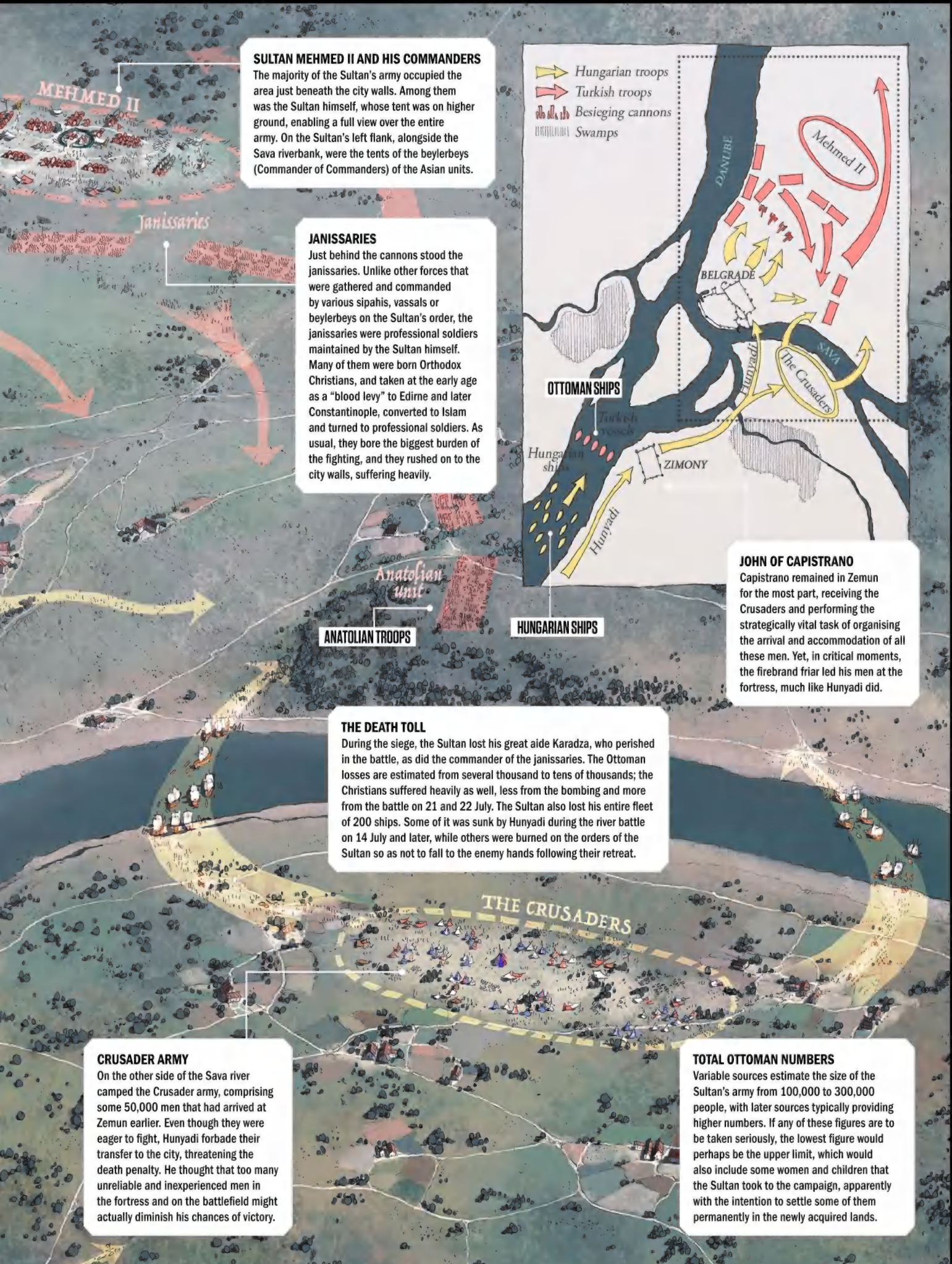
When it comes to any Medieval event, figures provided are unreliable, but it is believed that Hunyadi had at his disposal some 6,000 defenders at the beginning of the siege. They were joined by up to 10,000 Crusaders.

BELGRADE

The Belgrade fortress consisted of a wider, less fortified Lower City, which suffered the most from enemy bombardment and thus enabled the janissaries to penetrate its damaged walls, and the Upper City, heavily fortified and on the higher ground. The Upper City suffered less damage during the weeks of bombardment and remained impenetrable throughout the siege. Michael Szilágyi, the commander of Belgrade, was situated in the Upper City, but the overall army leader was, of course, Hunyadi himself.

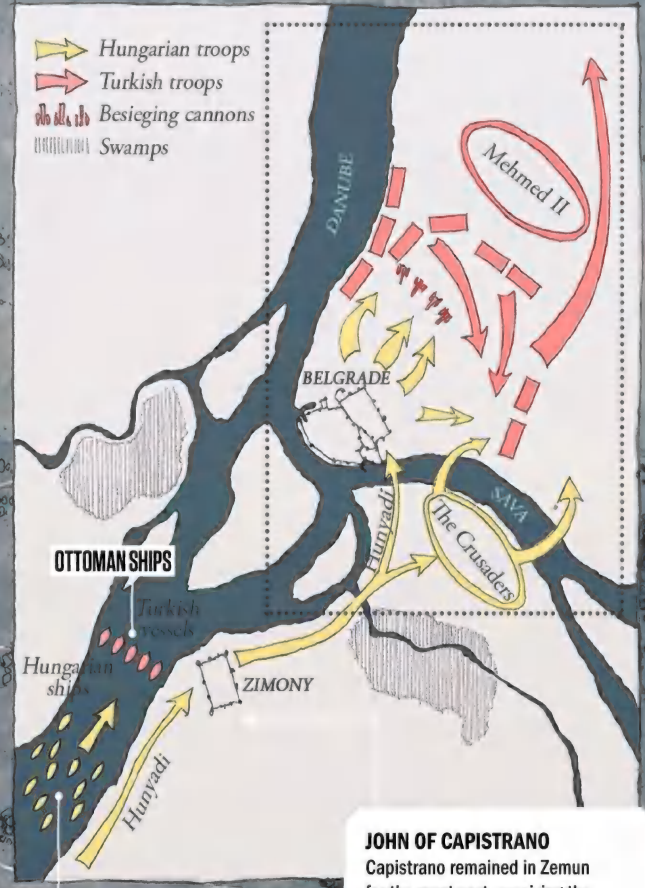
JOHN HUNYADI

Hunyadi himself was rarely in the fortress, in part because of antagonism between the Hungarian army and the Crusaders, and his fear - not unfounded - that he might not be safe among the Crusaders. He arrived from the north, broke the blockade and usually remained close to the city, on a ship or across the river, overlooking events and issuing orders.



SULTAN MEHMED II AND HIS COMMANDERS
 The majority of the Sultan's army occupied the area just beneath the city walls. Among them was the Sultan himself, whose tent was on higher ground, enabling a full view over the entire army. On the Sultan's left flank, alongside the Sava riverbank, were the tents of the beylerbeys (Commander of Commanders) of the Asian units.

JANISSARIES
 Just behind the cannons stood the janissaries. Unlike other forces that were gathered and commanded by various sipahis, vassals or beylerbeys on the Sultan's order, the janissaries were professional soldiers maintained by the Sultan himself. Many of them were born Orthodox Christians, and taken at the early age as a "blood levy" to Edirne and later Constantinople, converted to Islam and turned to professional soldiers. As usual, they bore the biggest burden of the fighting, and they rushed on to the city walls, suffering heavily.



JOHN OF CAPISTRANO
 Capistrano remained in Zemun for the most part, receiving the Crusaders and performing the strategically vital task of organising the arrival and accommodation of all these men. Yet, in critical moments, the firebrand friar led his men at the fortress, much like Hunyadi did.

THE DEATH TOLL
 During the siege, the Sultan lost his great aide Karadza, who perished in the battle, as did the commander of the janissaries. The Ottoman losses are estimated from several thousand to tens of thousands; the Christians suffered heavily as well, less from the bombing and more from the battle on 21 and 22 July. The Sultan also lost his entire fleet of 200 ships. Some of it was sunk by Hunyadi during the river battle on 14 July and later, while others were burned on the orders of the Sultan so as not to fall to the enemy hands following their retreat.

CRUSADER ARMY
 On the other side of the Sava river camped the Crusader army, comprising some 50,000 men that had arrived at Zemun earlier. Even though they were eager to fight, Hunyadi forbade their transfer to the city, threatening the death penalty. He thought that too many unreliable and inexperienced men in the fortress and on the battlefield might actually diminish his chances of victory.

TOTAL OTTOMAN NUMBERS
 Variable sources estimate the size of the Sultan's army from 100,000 to 300,000 people, with later sources typically providing higher numbers. If any of these figures are to be taken seriously, the lowest figure would perhaps be the upper limit, which would also include some women and children that the Sultan took to the campaign, apparently with the intention to settle some of them permanently in the newly acquired lands.



rashers of bacon, cloth and other flammable material, soaked in sulphite and gun powder, and began throwing it all in the ditch. In the hot July weather, this became a bonfire that destroyed all those trapped in the middle and prevented other Turks from coming to the city. The janissaries who remained within the city walls were slaughtered by the overwhelming number of defenders. Skilfully made “quasi unica manu” (“as a single hand”), this action proved decisive.

The new dawn revealed a terrifying picture. Dead, wounded and burned Turks were everywhere; passages were blocked by corpses, and women were walking over them collecting arrows, wood and other useful material for further defence. But there was no need for that. The Turks had no more power. As it appears, throughout the night, the Sultan himself took part in the fighting, desperately trying to stop the retreat and to organise the counterattack, and he was somehow wounded. At dawn, the Sultan decided to leave and ordered the remaining ships to be burned. Huge losses in men, especially janissaries, as well as the death of several commanders and distinguished Turks, were the main reasons for such a decision. Some authors even claim that the Sultan was heavily wounded and unconscious for days, and that upon waking up he was so desperate that his assistants used force to prevent him from committing suicide. Even if these stories are exaggerated, the whole campaign certainly was an embarrassment for Mehmed II. He was indeed a conqueror who had taken Constantinople, but Belgrade’s city walls set the limits of his conquests, as they did to his father a generation before.

Left: The siege as depicted by in a 1584 Ottoman miniature, showing the Sultan in the centre and the river blockade

Below: A Hungarian etching of John Hunyadi, from 1883



Images: Wiki / PD / CC



Source: Wiki / PD, CC, Michael Menas

“THE SULTAN WAS HEAVILY WOUNDED AND UNCONSCIOUS FOR DAYS, AND UPON WAKING UP HE WAS SO DESPERATE THAT HIS ASSISTANTS USED FORCE TO PREVENT HIM FROM COMMITTING SUICIDE”

Immediately after the Turkish attack had been averted, the Christians showed their antagonism. Hunyadi anticipated that naïve Crusaders would wish to rush out from the walls to fight the Turks, and gave strict orders to avoid the bloodshed. But the Crusaders did not care about his or Szilagyí's orders, nor did they listen to Capistrano at that point. Hungry and inexperienced, they wanted to capitalise

on this victory and capture the rich prey waiting in the Turkish tents in front of their eyes. The Turks left the first groups of men well alone, but once others approached in great numbers, they launched their cavalry and devastated the Crusaders. “Not even one in 100 men managed to escape,” to the fortress. In the weeks that followed, Capistrano proclaimed the end of the Crusade and eventually persuaded the remaining men, both those in Belgrade and in Zemun, to return home. For the many who died, in battle or from famine and diseases, it was too late. The two companions, Hunyadi and Capistrano, also suffered. Hunyadi died in the plague only two weeks after the Turkish retreat, while Capistrano outlived him for just two months. They had managed to defeat the Turks on the battlefield, but in doing so they had both succumbed to the black death.

After their death, no other noble or Christian dignitary showed such energy and skill in promoting Christian unity and opposing the Turks. Even if Belgrade resisted the siege this time, it was still doomed to fall – the events that followed, such as the ultimate demise of the Serbian state in 1460s and the eventual

Above: Detail of gothic fresco “Siege of Belgrade” in the Church of Immaculate Conception of Virgin Mary in Olomouc, probably the oldest depiction of the battle. John of Capistrano is in the centre

fall of Belgrade in 1521, were a consequence of the same disunity and lack of common goal and dedication as before. So, this Pyrrhic victory failed to resolve the antagonisms that made both Orthodox and Roman Catholic Christians in the Balkans and Central Europe easy prey for the Ottomans for centuries. The Turks continued with their gradual expansion for two centuries after the siege. Altogether, the story of the 1456 Siege of Belgrade is a chivalrous narrative about a rare occasion when Christian nobility were able to put aside their mutual hostilities in the name of the greater good. Perhaps historians are ultimately right in saying that the defenders of Belgrade were only postponing the inevitable; but for the Ancient Greeks, who invented Greek tragedy, it was precisely such human action in the face of inevitable fate that constituted the true essence and greatness of manhood, mankind even.

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FIGHTING WITH THE 'FORGOTTEN ARMY'

While WWII was drawing to a close in Europe, teenage British soldier Jim Kemp was still experiencing a vicious campaign in the jungles of Burma

WORDS TOM GARNER



As the guns fell silent over Europe on VE Day in May 1945, the momentous news meant virtually nothing to Allied soldiers who were fighting on the far side of the world. Campaigning in hot, humid conditions against an enemy who had no concept of surrender, the British Fourteenth Army in Burma could only wish to put down their weapons. The Imperial Japanese Army would fight to the death and in the end it would take the use of nuclear weapons on home soil to force their final capitulation.

Since 1941 Burma had been a hellish charnel house in which the Allies fought. British and Commonwealth forces had initially been forced to retreat from the country to the borders of India and China and constantly wrestled with the relentless advance of Japanese forces. Hindered by difficult terrain, disease and weather, the land campaign to retake Burma was the longest undertaken by the Western Allies in the Pacific Theatre.

However, the Allies – and particularly the Fourteenth Army – fought back with great ferocity and by 1945 they had pushed the Japanese back to the very gates of the Burmese capital. Dubbed the 'Forgotten Army' by the press and even their own redoubtable commander, this



Jim Kemp pictured in the Far East. His slouch hat is pinned with the badge of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment

force was nevertheless characterised by great bravery and military success under terrible conditions. Among their number from early 1945 was a teenage British conscript called Jim Kemp who fought with the army during its final push against the Japanese. Speaking 75 years after VJ Day was finally declared, Kemp describes his experiences of jungle warfare, hand-to-hand combat and the traumatic birth of modern India.

CONSCRIPTION

Kemp was 'called up' for military service at the age of only 18 and initially struggled to find an appropriate home in the military, "I was conscripted into the armed forces but it was

alright and I actually felt quite happy about it. I had a brief period in the Royal Navy but they didn't really like me so they put me in the RAF. They didn't like me too much either so they then put me into the army!"

Kemp initially joined the Essex Regiment and began his training at Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk. After just six weeks of training he was deployed for service in Burma, which came as something of a surprise, "I probably only knew that I was going to Burma the day before I went! We'd had a few guesses that we might be going there due to the changes in clothing and that sort of thing but apart from that there was no indication. I felt OK about going out to the Far East to be honest. In those days we didn't really care about where we were going because it was something of an adventure."

Due to the lack of coverage about the Allied campaign against the Japanese, even Kemp's mother was not too concerned about her son's deployment, "They were known as the 'Forgotten Army' and therefore I hadn't heard anything about the fighting in Burma. When I was at home my sister told me, 'Mum was pleased when she heard you were going to Burma because it won't be so bad out there'. Afterwards, I thought it was a good job that Mum didn't know what it was actually like."

By the time Kemp arrived in India he had been transferred to the Royal Warwickshire Regiment as a corporal. He found himself in a situation that was vastly different to what he had experienced at home, "We were put in a big transit camp and it was a hell of a big site

British soldiers pictured during mopping-up operations at Pyawbwe during the advance on Rangoon



"SINCE 1941 BURMA HAD BEEN A HELLISH CHARNEL HOUSE IN WHICH THE ALLIES FOUGHT"

Inset Image: Royal British Legion and Jim Kemp

© Getty



© Getty

British soldiers patrol through Burmese jungle and swampland during the advance towards Rangoon. Kemp recalls that marches like these were "a long slog"

where the troops were being moved about. We didn't know what to expect to be honest but I was there and I had to make the best of it. I didn't adapt to the heat very well but I pushed through and got there. You certainly couldn't say, 'Well, that's it – I'm going home.'

While he was based in India, Kemp completed his training, "I was trained as a typical infantryman but I was also trained to use a PIAT, which was an anti-tank gun so anti-tank warfare became my specialism."

RAMREE ISLAND

By January 1945, the Fourteenth Army was advancing upon the Burmese capital of Rangoon (now Yangon), which was located on the Southern Front of the campaign. Allied operations were not just conducted inland but also on the Burmese coast, which included the Japanese-occupied Ramree Island. Located off the shores of what is now Rakhine State, Ramree is the largest island off Burma,

although it is only separated by a thin strait of approximately 150 metres in width.

In January 1945, the island was occupied by a Japanese garrison that included a battalion from 121st Infantry Regiment. The British wanted to retake Ramree so that they could establish airbases to support the mainland campaign. Lieutenant-General William Slim, Commander of the Fourteenth Army, considered that Ramree "would provide the sea-supplied airfields that could nourish my army in a dash for Rangoon".

The Japanese had already established an airfield, which needed to be captured and on 14 January the 26th Indian Infantry Division was ordered to conduct an amphibious assault under the command of Major-General Cyril Lomax. With naval and air support, the British had to first capture the port of Kyaukpyu in the northern part of the island, as well as the nearby airfield.

For Kemp, who was still only 19 by this stage, Ramree Island would be his first experience

of combat, "The Japanese had been on there for quite a while and they'd built a big airfield. The British decided that they didn't want the Japanese to bomb or shoot at our boys so our first task was to get rid of the airfield."

Assault troops were deployed to land on beaches west of Kyaukpyu with the amphibious landings being codenamed 'Operation Matador'. For Kemp, his introduction to warfare included simplistic orders, "The attack was well planned and organised. They basically said to us boys, 'The airfield is over there about five miles away – in you go and sort it out'. That was it."

Kyaukpyu and the nearby airfield were taken but the Japanese continued to fight rear-guard actions in the forests and swamps of Ramree for weeks afterwards until the island was secured on 17 February. Kemp understatedly recalls that the battle and the fighting he experienced elsewhere in Burma was always confusing and uncertain, "What an experience that was! In those days you



THE MYTH OF RAMREE'S CROCODILES

For many years, it was believed that an entire Japanese battalion were eaten by mass attack of crocodiles in the later stages of the Battle of Ramree Island

After the invasion of Ramree Island in January 1945, the British pursued the approximately 1,000-strong Japanese force into almost impenetrable swamps. In order to cut the Japanese off from the mainland Burmese coast, the British formed a series of barricades including mortar and machine-gun posts that were mounted either on railway tracks or small canvas boats.

The surrounded Japanese came under shellfire and according to British eyewitnesses the island's saltwater crocodiles began to appear in the swamps on 19 February. The crocodiles reputedly feasted on the trapped Japanese who refused to surrender. One naval commando, the naturalist Bruce Wright, described how "scattered rifle shots in the pitch black swamps punctured the screams of wounded men crushed in the jaws of huge reptiles and the blurred worrying sound of spinning crocodiles. At dawn the vultures arrived to clean up what the crocodiles had left. Of about 1,000 Japanese that entered the swamps, only about 20 were found alive".

Wright's testimony, if true, would make the crocodile attacks on Ramree Island the worst recorded in history but the story has been questioned. Wright did serve during the battle but admitted that he wasn't present during the alleged attack and heard it second-hand from a comrade. Nevertheless, the influential American conservationist Roger Caras believed his story because of Wright's naturalist credentials and the attacks became famous.

Others have questioned whether the ecosystems of Ramree Island could support hundreds of crocodiles to

eat an entire Japanese battalion. Saltwater crocodiles do have a long history of attacking and even eating humans when their territory is encroached upon but they attack people less often than Nile crocodiles. It is also unlikely that there was a battalion of Japanese soldiers by 19 February because fighting had been occurring on Ramree for over a month with heavy casualties. It is more likely that the Japanese died from British gunfire and diseases than crocodile attacks.

However, it is plausible that perhaps 10-15 Japanese soldiers were killed by crocodiles at a tidal creek at Min Chaung and perhaps by some sharks in the strait between Ramree and the mainland. It is also estimated that hundreds of the 1,000 Japanese soldiers escaped the British lines and that Wright's 20 'survivors' were in fact simply taken prisoner during the campaign.

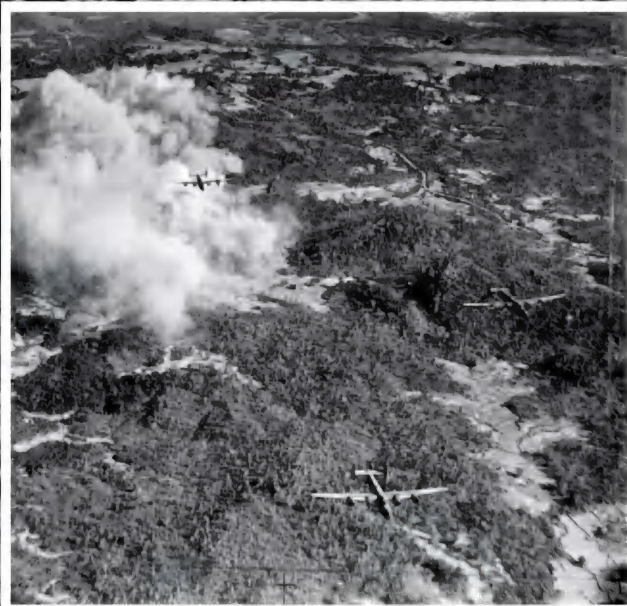


Allied soldiers wade ashore onto Ramree Island

Source: [WIKI / PD / CC](#) Saltwater crocodile: [WIKI / PD / CC](#) / Lip Kee Yap



Source: [WIKI / PD / CC](#)



Source: [WIKI / PD / CC](#)

didn't know where you were going, what you were going to do or whether you could do it. A lot of the time the fighting that awaited us was an unknown quantity and we didn't know if we were going to come back again. The Japanese on Ramree Island were pretty resilient and they would rather have been killed than surrender, put it that way."

The Allied blockade around Ramree Island continued until 22 February while the remaining Japanese were cleared out from their fighting positions. Only around 20 were taken prisoner although approximately 500 managed to escape.

OPERATION DRACULA

After Ramree Island, the Warwicks moved back to mainland Burma and began preparing for the capture of Rangoon itself. As well as being the Burmese capital, Rangoon was the main seaport for the Japanese to receive supplies and reinforcements. Its strategic importance

Inset, top: Men of the 26th Indian Infantry Division prepare a meal beside a temple on Ramree Island

Inset, above: RAF Liberators bomb Ramree Island, January 1945

Jim Kemp pictured during his army service. He was still in his teens when he fought against the Japanese



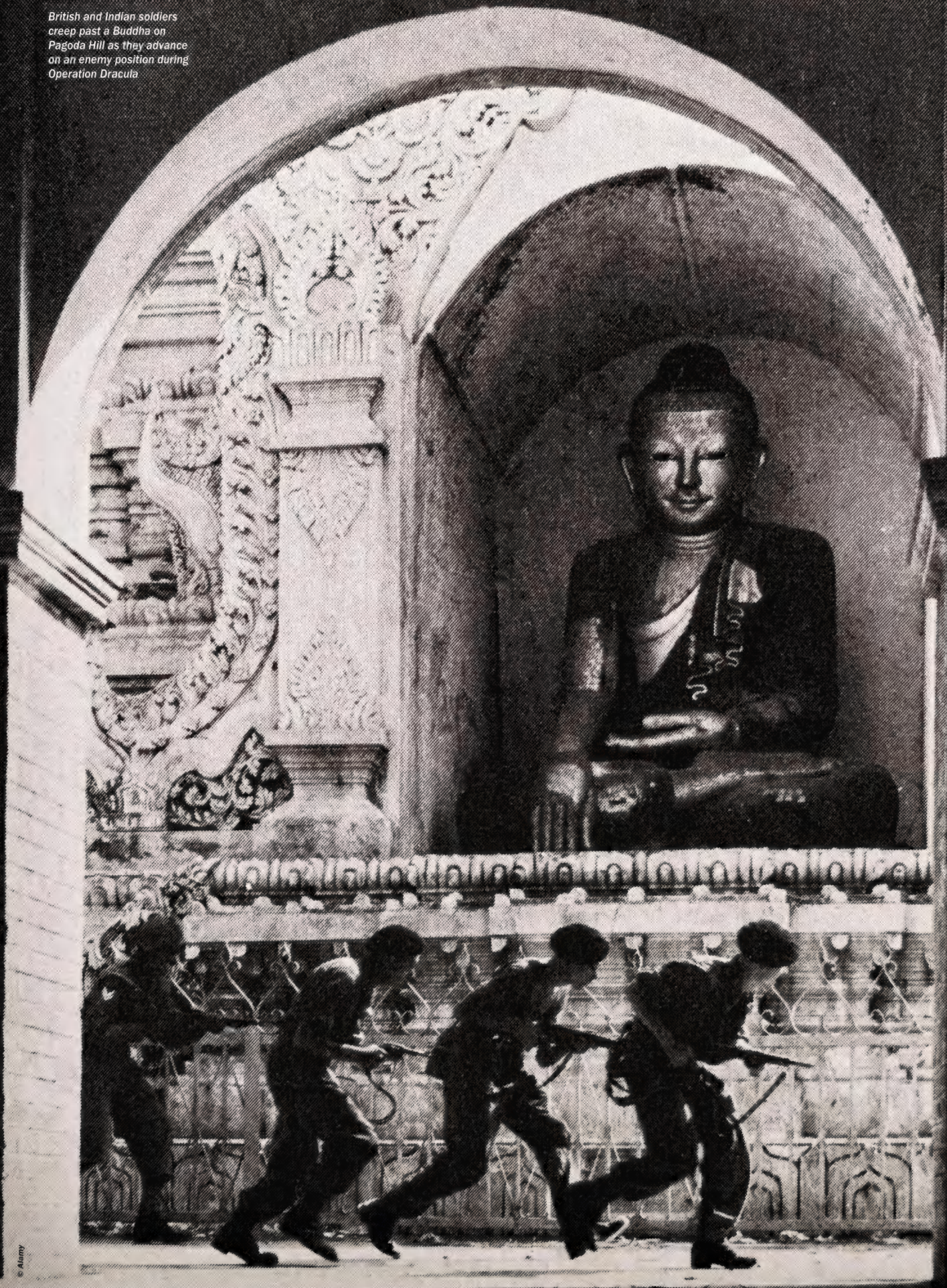
© Royal British Legion and Jim Kemp

With a body length of up to six metres (20 feet), male saltwater crocodiles are the largest living reptile known to science



FIGHTING WITH THE 'FORGOTTEN ARMY'

British and Indian soldiers creep past a Buddha on Pagoda Hill as they advance on an enemy position during Operation Dracula



© Army



had already been demonstrated when the Japanese had bombed the city in December 1941, which caused much of its population to flee. Left without an effective administration, British-led Allied forces could not hold Rangoon from the Japanese invasion in March 1942 and they had been compelled to evacuate from the capital. This had serious consequences because the fall of Rangoon meant that the Allies could no longer defend Burma and were forced to retreat to India and parts of China.

By early 1945, the situation had been reversed but with more severe ramifications for the Japanese. The Allies had already taken Mandalay and Meiktila and the Japanese could not advance either to the north or east from Rangoon because it would cut their links to the Burma Railway. The railway had been built at the cost of 102,000 Allied prisoners-of-war who died during its construction but it was the vital Japanese supply link between Burma and their occupied territories in Thailand and Malaya. If Rangoon fell to the Allies, the Japanese would be forced to withdraw from most of Burma. They would also have to abandon much of their equipment because a retreat would require a march on foot through jungle.

From April 1945, the Fourteenth Army advanced to within 40 miles of Rangoon but they became delayed by a Japanese force at Pegu (now Bago). This delay was a concern to the Allies because they wanted to capture Rangoon before the monsoon season began. This would make many roads impassable and create difficulties for air supplies to be dropped. Slim was also mindful that the



A Chinese soldier, 10, who is a member of an army division boarding a plane returning them to China, following the capture of Myitkyina airfield, Burma

Source: Wiki / PD / CC

Japanese would probably put up a determined defence as they had elsewhere in the Far East and Pacific theatres of the war. This would be particularly so with Rangoon because of its strategic importance.

Slim's superior Lord Louis Mountbatten, Supreme Allied Commander of South East Asia Command, ordered that Rangoon be taken before 5 May 1945 and a planned attack known as 'Operation Dracula' was put into effect. Dracula was a combined amphibious and airborne assault on Rangoon where a Gurkha parachute battalion would land at the mouth of the Rangoon River and secure coastal batteries while naval minesweepers cleared

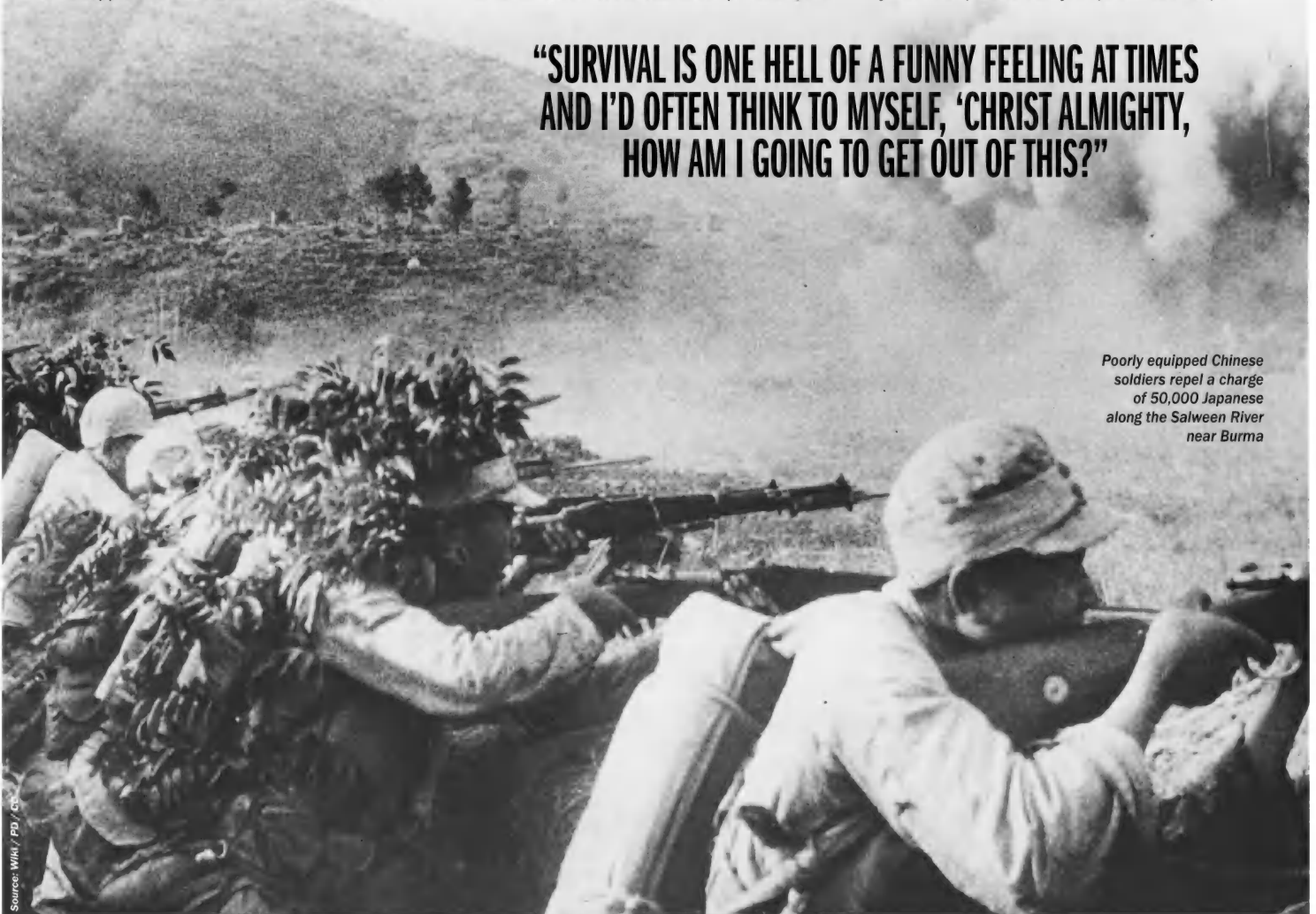
the waters of mines. The 26th Indian Infantry Division, which included the Warwicks in the 4th Indian Infantry Brigade, would also advance on the city by establishing beachheads on both banks of the Rangoon River.

On 1 May 1945, 14 USAAF squadrons bombed Japanese defences in southern Rangoon before the Gurkhas in 50th Indian Parachute Brigade were dropped onto Elephant Point at the mouth of the Rangoon River. After several firefights with small groups of Japanese soldiers, the river approaches to the capital were captured.

Meanwhile, Kemp and the Warwicks were the first regiment on land to enter Rangoon although they did not encounter the expected heavy fighting. The Japanese Burma Area Army under the command of Lieutenant-General Heitaro Kimura had been stationed in Rangoon but most of his troops were not front line soldiers – they were instead mostly communications and naval personnel. Kimura decided not to defend Rangoon and launched an evacuation in late April. This was against orders issued by Field Marshal Hisaichi Terauchi of the Southern Expeditionary Army Group who demanded a fight to the death at Rangoon. Kimura defied this command because he wanted to hold on to his remaining forces.

It was during the conclusion of Operation Dracula that Kemp and his comrades heard about Victory in Europe. VE Day had occurred on 8 May but because of the distant lines of communication Kemp did not hear about the event until four days later on 12 May. Having just taken part in a major operation, Kemp

“SURVIVAL IS ONE HELL OF A FUNNY FEELING AT TIMES AND I'D OFTEN THINK TO MYSELF, 'CHRIST ALMIGHTY, HOW AM I GOING TO GET OUT OF THIS?'"



Poorly equipped Chinese soldiers repel a charge of 50,000 Japanese along the Salween River near Burma

Source: Wiki / PD / CC

could not comprehend the peace that had broken out on the other side of the world, "We didn't really want to know because we just had to keep doing what we had to in order to survive. Survival is one hell of a funny feeling at times and I'd often think to myself, 'Christ Almighty, how am I going to get out of this?'"

"CLOSE-QUARTERS FIGHTING"

Operation Dracula had been an important event in the Burma Campaign but Kemp's most significant fighting took place afterwards. The Warwicks had been ordered to return to India on 20 May but three days later they found themselves fighting a small but desperate battle at Theinzeik, east of Rangoon. Kemp was part of a small group of 24 British soldiers commanded by Major J. A. Collins who were patrolling along a dried-up river, "We had to form ourselves up into a reconnaissance patrol to find out where the Japanese were and what they were going to do. It was a quite a scary thing because we didn't know where we were going."

Collins's patrol suddenly encountered a large Japanese force that was later estimated to be more than 100 in number although Kemp did not know that at the time, "We were walking our patrol and the officer in charge said that we'd better stay where we were and do a recce to find the Japanese. We did that and then the officers announced that they wanted to sort out the Japanese there and then. We had gone out there as a reconnaissance patrol and finished up as a fighting patrol."

"THE BRUTAL DAWN OF THE NUCLEAR AGE WAS RECEIVED WITH RELIEF AS IT SPARED ALLIED TROOPS FROM FIGHTING ON MAINLAND JAPAN"

In an astonishing but desperate fight the outnumbered British achieved a small victory without any fatalities, "We didn't know we were fighting far more Japanese than us – not at all – but none of the British soldiers were killed. We just didn't know how many we were facing. We went in there with bayonets fixed and we had to go in and destroy them. It was close-quarters fighting and simple survival was going through my mind. The key to survival was that if you didn't kill the Japanese soldier in front of you then he would kill you. The Japanese wouldn't give in and they would never surrender."

For this action at Theinzeik, Major Collins was awarded the Military Cross, Britain's third-highest decoration for gallantry for his leadership. Other soldiers were awarded a Military Medal and a Mention in Despatches. The Warwicks as a whole who were serving in Burma were also commended by their divisional commander Major-General Henry Chambers.

The grim reality of hand-to-hand combat was a potent example of the vicious, determined fighting qualities of the Japanese

and Kemp had to remain pragmatic despite the hardships, "We didn't really know how badly the Japanese would treat prisoners-of-war. You'd be told that the Japanese would kill rather than surrender themselves but what did that mean? It was just a few words but so many things would go through your mind. You couldn't imagine just walking through the jungle and suddenly being shot at. It was hard to understand how the Japanese could act like that and the best description I can make is that they would go into battle 'head-first'."

As well as the Japanese, Kemp also had to contend with extreme campaigning conditions in a vast, dense landscape, "The humidity and heat was constant but you had to cope with it. These were some of the main problems and of course where we were in Burma was covered in jungle. If you had been walking through the jungle for six or seven days you wouldn't know how far you'd travelled unless there was a landmark like a village or something similar. However, there were often no villages around with any information to tell you where you were. You had a map of course but you still often didn't know your location. Also, when we were advancing we would travel on foot for most of the way so it was a long slog."

In addition to the difficult terrain, the jungles of Burma were breeding grounds for debilitating tropical diseases. However, if Allied soldiers became ill they still had to continue on the campaign no matter how serious their condition,



INDIAN NATIONAL ARMY

The fall of Rangoon in 1945 was partially due to the low morale of Indian soldiers who fought for the Japanese

First formed in August 1942, the Indian National Army (INA) was an armed force of Indian nationalists who collaborated with Japan in Southeast Asia during WWII. Founded by Mohan Singh, a British Indian Army officer who was captured by the Japanese in 1941, the INA aimed to end British rule in India with the offer of help from the Japanese in exchange for fighting alongside them.

The INA's initial soldiers were formed from Indian POWs but they later included Indian civilian volunteers from Japanese-occupied territories like Malaya and Burma. Its numbers swelled to thousands of men and after Singh was dismissed by the Japanese, the force was led by Indian nationalist Subhas Chandra Bose from July 1943. Bose hoped that British military misfortunes in Southeast Asia would persuade more troops from the British

Indian Army to defect en masse to the INA but this proved false when many Indian POWs refused to join.

Nevertheless, three battalions of the INA fought alongside the Japanese during operations like the Arakan Campaign and the Battle of Imphal. Their performance was mixed and many were captured. The British were not concerned about their military ability and when the Japanese retreated through Burma during 1944-45 desertions and mass surrenders became commonplace.

During Operation Dracula, a large contingent of the INA found itself in Rangoon. Its morale was low and as on many other occasions during the retreat, its troops deserted or surrendered to the advancing Allies. These actions, along with the unsuitability of many of his other Japanese troops, convinced Rangoon's defender Heitaro Kimura to abandon the city. The INA was effectively finished as a military force and Bose was killed during an aircraft crash over occupied Taiwan.

Thousands of INA soldiers subsequently became POWs with some being put on trial by the British. This alerted many Indians to the organisation's existence and its pro-independence aims. The trials were highly publicised and the generated press interest helped to increase further support for Indian independence.

INA and Japanese soldiers fight together in Burma, c.1944



INA soldiers pictured after being captured at Mount Popa, c.April 1945



Source: WPA / PD / CC

*A British soldier
gingerly searches
a ruined Burmese
railway station for
Japanese snipers*





British soldiers rush ashore to search a Burmese village for Japanese troops

"I contracted malaria but it was nothing really, it just made you feel bad. I didn't get sent back [for treatment] so I had to keep going."

VJ DAY AND INDIAN PARTITION

The Warwicks eventually returned to India and were stationed there when the atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on 6 and 9 August 1945. For Kemp and his comrades, the brutal dawn of the nuclear age was received with relief as it spared Allied troops from fighting on mainland Japan, "It was good news to us because it did help to end the war and I'm sure that it actually saved a lot of lives although it killed thousands of people."

Japan surrendered five days after the bombing of Nagasaki on 14 August with Victory over Japan Day (VJ Day) occurring the following day. Kemp and his friends celebrated the end of the war but their festivities were muted by a supply shortage, "When the war ended I was back in India. We got the news that the war had finished and we celebrated with one bottle of beer between four of us. The three men I was with decided that the bottle we had should be kept somehow so we soaked the label off. I've still got it as a souvenir."

After VJ Day, Kemp remained in India and was eventually transferred to the Royal Leicestershire Regiment. While he was still serving on the subcontinent, Kemp became embroiled in the mass violence that occurred when India was partitioned in 1947 following its independence from Britain. The religious divide between predominantly Hindu India and Muslim

"EVEN WITHOUT AIR AND NAVAL SUPPORT, THE FOURTEENTH ARMY HAD ACHIEVED MILITARY MIRACLES IN BURMA"

Pakistan triggered terrible, large-scale violence when the displacement of 14-16 million people created a huge refugee crisis. This was the largest movement of a population in history where Hindus and Sikhs travelled to India and Muslims to Pakistan.

British troops had been attempting to prevent disorder and civil war since August 1946 but the violence had spread from city to city in the border regions of the new India-Pakistan border. What had been the British Indian Army was also divided between its soldiers and their new forces on religious grounds, and many British officers and troops like Kemp stayed in India to assist ahead of the transition.

A 55,000-strong Punjab Boundary Force was put in place to quell the violence but they were not enough to prevent some of the worst atrocities in the region. In the Punjab alone over 200,000 people were killed and total estimates of the dead in India and Pakistan were perhaps as high as two million. Massacres between civilians were commonplace and for Kemp, who had already

experienced brutal combat against the Japanese, the partitioning of India was a terrible experience, "It's difficult to explain but the Indians were a very split nation and there was no end of religious difference. At that time if somebody had said they were a Pakistani in India or an Indian in Pakistan they would have been shot straightaway for not being part of the majority. What happened [during partition] was wicked."

Kemp was finally demobbed from the British Army in 1947 but some of his fellow soldiers from Britain remained in India for seven months after independence. The last British unit to eventually leave the subcontinent was 1st Battalion, Somerset Light Infantry, which departed from Bombay (now Mumbai) on 28 February 1948. Lord Louis Mountbatten, the last viceroy of India, was subsequently criticised for failing to successfully handle the mass migrations and violence that had primarily risen from the British desire to quickly depart from the country.

REMEMBERING THE 'FORGOTTEN'

When Kemp returned home, the memories of what the Fourteenth Army had achieved during WWII were largely neglected compared to the Allied efforts of those who had fought in Europe and elsewhere. This was surprising because the scale and achievements of Slim's force was significant. At its greatest, the Fourteenth Army numbered over one million men and was the largest Commonwealth army that



FIGHTING WITH THE 'FORGOTTEN ARMY'



was ever assembled. Around 615,000 tons of supplies and 315,000 reinforcements were all airlifted into action and 210,000 casualties were similarly evacuated. The army had also received extensive support from the Royal Air Force, Indian Air Force and Fleet Air Arm who carried out constant bombing raids, fighter cover and photographic reconnaissance. The Royal Navy and Royal Indian Navy had also provided essential amphibious assistance and minesweeping operations.

Even without air and naval support, the Fourteenth Army had achieved military miracles in Burma. Retaking a country with such hostile terrain and a formidable enemy was an almost impossible task. At the beginning of campaigning, the Fourteenth Army held the longest battle line of any army during WWII, which stretched from the Bay of Bengal to the Chinese-Indian border. Nevertheless, the army had stepped forward and won great victories at the Battles of Imphal and Kohima with the culminating victory being the fall of Rangoon.

Despite all this, Slim knew that his army's efforts would not be fully appreciated. He told his men, "When you go home don't worry about what to tell your loved ones and friends about

your service in Asia. No one will know where you were, or where it is if you do. You are, and will remain 'The Forgotten Army'."

The name stuck and Kemp recalls that when he returned to Britain people would jest about the Fourteenth Army, "We didn't know why it was called 'The Forgotten Army'. It was just a bit of hearsay with people joking, 'You were forgotten because you weren't heard of!'. It was just one of those things."

Kemp remains proud of his wartime service and has been chairman of his local Burma Star Association for many years. For the 70th anniversary of VJ Day in August 2015 he headed the parade of Far East veterans down Whitehall in London before he laid a wreath at the Cenotaph. He still believes that it is important that the sacrifices of Allied troops in Burma should not be forgotten, "It's definitely something that people should never forget, particularly if it helps people to understand what happened. It's so difficult to make people who have never seen, heard or smelt the experience to understand what it was like. A lot of the time, for me anyway, the smell of war is something that I can't forget."

Above, top: British troops make their way ashore on Ramree Island, 21 January 1945

Above: An M3 Stuart tank from an Indian cavalry regiment advances towards Rangoon, April 1945

Above, left: Two British soldiers on patrol in the ruins of the Burmese town of Bahe during the advance on Mandalay

The Burma Campaign of 1944-45 that Kemp participated in caused combined casualties of almost 53,400 Allied and Japanese soldiers. However, this was only part of the wider Burma Campaigns that had been fought since 1941 that had combined casualties over 417,200 soldiers. Even this figure does not include the estimated 250,000-1,000,000 Burmese civilians who were killed, which made this part of WWII as horrendous as the campaigns that were fought in Europe and elsewhere.

For Kemp, the passage of three-quarters of a century has allowed to him to be reconciled with the enemy he fought against and the hard times he lived through, "It feels good to me that it's 75 years since it ended considering what things could have been like. It's something that I shall never forget but you can't hold a grudge against people that you didn't know. It's all over and done with now."

© Royal British Legion and Jim Kemp



Jim Kemp is a member of both the Royal British Legion and Burma Star Association. The Royal British Legion is Britain's largest military charity for veterans and their families while the Burma Star Association's membership is open to all men and women who served in the Burma Campaign.

For more information visit www.britishlegion.co.uk and www.burmastar.org.uk



A-10 WARTHOG

Slow but steady, this Cold War close-air-support aircraft is a favourite of friendly ground forces and recognised by the buzz of its 30mm cannon

WORDS TIM WILLIAMSON

The A-10 Thunderbolt is a single-seat, close-air support fighter jet that also goes by the names Warthog and Tankbuster. Developed for the US Air Force by Fairchild Republic Company (now Northrop Grumman), the original commission was for a low-altitude, low-speed close air support aircraft. Work on prototypes began in 1967 and its first flight was in 1972. There are several reasons why the A-10 has weathered 40-plus years of advancing military technology – chief among them its versatility and high survival rate.

The A-10 boasts a short takeoff and landing capacity with a range of nearly 1,300 kilometres (800 miles). Commonly used for troop support and ground attacks, it can loiter for long periods at low speeds and altitudes below 300 metres (985 feet) and it's capable of soaking up as much damage as it can dish out. The A-10 can take direct hits from armour-piercing and explosive shells, has multiple redundancies for its flight systems and, most incredibly, it can return to base on one engine, one tail stabiliser, one elevator and even having lost half a wing. This hardy design is necessary due to the close support roles it fulfils, exposing the aircraft to ground fire. As a result, it's well known among US Air Force pilots for its 'get home' effectiveness.

FUEL TANKS

The Warthog's four main fuel tanks are self-sealing and lined with fire-retardant foam.

30MM AVENGER

The General Dynamics Avenger 30mm (1.2in) cannon can fire standard, incendiary or even depleted-uranium rounds.

"THE A-10 CAN TAKE DIRECT HITS FROM ARMOUR-PIERCING & EXPLOSIVE SHELLS"

WINGS

As part of a service life extension programme, 242 new A-10 wing sets have been produced to extend the Warthog's operation until 2040.

AGM-65 MAVERICK

These air-to-ground missiles have been around as long as the A-10. They're equipped with either contact or delayed-action fuses

A-10 THUNDERBOLT II

COMMISSIONED:	1976
ORIGIN:	USA
RANGE:	1,287KM (800 MILES)
ENGINES:	2× GENERAL ELECTRIC TF34-GE-100A TURBOFANS, 9,065 LBF (40.32 KN)
CREW:	1
PRIMARY WEAPON:	GAU-8 AVENGER 30MM

The huge engines provide 4,111kg (9,065lb) of thrust



POWERPLANT

Two TF34-GE-100, non-afterburning, twin turbofans provide 4,111kg (9,065lb) of thrust each. The engines are mounted above the airframe to reduce heat signature (for evading heat-seeking missiles), as well as to enable the pilot to fly the aircraft with one engine out of action.

A US Air Force technician performs maintenance on an A-10 Thunderbolt II



A-10C Thunderbolt II being refuelled at Plovdiv, Bulgaria



“THE ENGINES ARE MOUNTED ABOVE THE AIRFRAME TO REDUCE HEAT SIGNATURE (FOR EVADING HEAT-SEEKING MISSILES), AS WELL AS TO ENABLE THE PILOT TO FLY THE AIRCRAFT WITH ONE ENGINE OUT OF ACTION”



An A-10 Thunderbolt II takes flight at Eielson Air Force Base, Alaska



An A-10 Warthog fires a Maverick missile during a training mission



AVIONICS

Modern A-10s have been upgraded from the original 1972 blueprint, with navigation and targeting systems dramatically improved. In the 1980s Low Altitude Safety and Targeting Enhancement was installed, which included a computerised weapons operation and a low-altitude collision warning system. A-10s were fitted with Night Vision Imaging Systems in the 1990s, enabling pilots to operate in low-visibility conditions, while after the turn of the century they received Precision Engagement upgrades, which modernised flight controls, navigation and the fire control system – these updated Warthogs are now designated A-10C.

All images: WIKI / CC / PD Gov unless otherwise stated



An A-10 Thunderbolt II with serpentine nose art around the Avenger cannon

ARMAMENT

The A-10 can carry nearly half its weight again in armaments and their associated systems, with an external load of up to 7,260 kilograms (16,005 pounds). It's equipped with 11 pylons along which laser weapon guidance and support systems can be attached, plus ordnance. It's capable of carrying a range of cluster and 227-kilogram (500-pound) general-purpose bombs, Hydra rockets, plus up to ten Maverick air-to-ground missiles weighing 304 kilograms (670 pounds) apiece. The latter can destroy a tank in a single hit – however, at a cost of up to £105,000 (\$160,000) a pop, a cavalier attitude with the Mavericks is not tolerated. The Warthog's main weapon is the Avenger 30-millimetre (1.2-inch) cannon mounted under the nose of the A-10, with a top fire rate of 4,200 rounds a minute and an effective range of over 6.5 kilometres (4 miles). The cannon can easily disable a main battle tank in the hands of a competent pilot.



Left: 30mm rounds loaded into an A-10A Thunderbolt II



Right: The massive damage caused by the Avenger cannon

COCKPIT

The A-10 was designed to sustain heavy damage during combat, and is particularly well-armoured around the cockpit, to increase its survivability. Sensitive parts of the flight control system, along with the pilot, are shielded by a 'tub' of titanium armour: 544 kilograms (1,200 pounds) of this super-hard metal is layered in plates up to 3.8 centimetres (1.5 inches) thick around the cockpit, based on the likely trajectories of incoming projectiles. It can withstand fire from similar cannons to its own main weapon, as well as large-calibre rounds. A nylon spall shield also protects the pilot from shrapnel and round fragmentation, while the transparent canopy (which can't afford the same level of protection) can still resist ballistics from small arms.

Images: WWJ/OC/PO / Steven Fine



Pilots are protected from shrapnel by a nylon spall shield

Inset: The interior of an A-10C Warthog's cockpit



An Air Force A-10 Thunderbolt II flies in an undisclosed location during Operation Inherent Resolve



“THEIR STRAFING RUNS AND THE CHARACTERISTIC BUZZ OF THE 30MM CANNON HAVE GAINED HUGE POPULARITY AMONG INFANTRY ON OPERATIONS AGAINST ISIS IN IRAQ”

SERVICE HISTORY

After its first introduction in the late 1970s, the A-10 did not instantly gain the affection and respect it would later enjoy – its cumbersome low speed earned it the disparaging nickname ‘Warthog’ among fast jet pilots. Nonetheless, the aircraft’s ability to fly at low altitude and provide accurate ground support was deemed essential for the US military, whose experience in Vietnam had exposed major gaps in USAF’s close-air-support capacity.

Though it was too late to impact the Vietnam War, the A-10 nonetheless soon began earning a reputation for its dependability and resilience. After the end of the Cold War, A-10s participated in the first Gulf War and later during the Kosovo conflict. Though over 20 years old by the 21st century, Warthogs also took part in the 2003 Invasion of Iraq. Their strafing

runs and the characteristic buzz of the 30mm cannon have gained huge popularity among infantry on operations against ISIS in Iraq and Syria, as well as in Afghanistan and elsewhere.

Below: An A-10 Thunderbolt II deploys its flairs over Afghanistan



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Heroes of the Victoria Cross

ROBERT CAIN

Armed with a PIAT gun and incredible courage, one officer helps fend off the Germans during the Battle of Arnhem

WORDS TIM WILLIAMSON

Hushed, anxious voices and the clattering of kit echoes around the old church at Oosterbeek, as the early morning light filters in and begins to rouse the British troops. One officer, Major Richard 'Dickie' Lonsdale, makes his way through the pews, lined full of sleeping soldiers, toward the pulpit. Some look up as he passes, noticing his arm in a sling and the bloodied bandage wrapped around his head. Casting his eye over the beleaguered and unlikely congregation, already bloodied and worn down from four days of fighting in enemy territory, Lonsdale draws a breath and pauses as he musters up what words of encouragement he can.

Major Robert Cain, of the 2nd South Staffordshire regiment, was among Lonsdale's men that day, huddled in the church just west of the Dutch town of Arnhem. The 35-year-old military veteran knew more than most just what was coming their way, and he had more reason than most to want revenge. Operation Market Garden, the British and Polish-led advance into German-occupied Holland, had so far been a disaster and was on the brink of failure. Cain's regiment had been among those that had borne the worst of the fighting.

The plan had been to pull off one of the largest aerial assaults ever conceived, capture key bridges on the Rhine and return home for tea and medals. The 2nd Army, as well as

Below: Major Cain was awarded the Victoria Cross for his part in the Battle of Arnhem, where he commanded the 2nd South Staffordshire regiment. He personally disabled and destroyed several German tanks



Polish brigades, would then move up from the south to support and help hold the positions. However, the British paratroopers and other infantry had dropped right into the heart of two German Panzer divisions. What was supposed to be a surprise attack, meeting limited resistance, turned into a massacre.

After joining the 2nd battalion in 1942, Cain saw action during the invasion of Sicily, in what would be the campaign to drive the Nazis from Italy. As well as amphibious landings, a number of British and US troops were dropped in by parachute and glider, but difficulties with weather and landing the fragile gliders safely presented grave peril before the troops even got a look at the enemy. Similar problems now hampered the British over Holland. After his glider malfunctioned on Sunday 17 September, as part of the first lift to Arnhem, Cain joined the second lift the following day, but was delayed further by fog. This lost crucial time in an attack that was, by this point, no longer a surprise for the German forces.

Once safely landed and organised, the 2nd South Staffordshire Regiment advanced through the city of Arnhem. However, the men soon found themselves surrounded by well-prepared German defences. Enemy marksmen seemingly picked off soldiers at will, while self-propelled guns and tanks blocked the route ahead and ceaseless shelling went on unchecked. Soon

**"I THOUGHT, HE MUST BE A VERY BRAVE MAN
TO BE KNOCKED OUT AND RETURN TO TAKE UP
THE SAME POSITION, AND STILL HIT TANKS.
BUT HE WAS STILL FIRING WHEN WE LEFT"**

Richard Long, Glider Pilot Regiment, witnessing
Major Cain's return to the field

*Paratroopers waiting
in roadside ditches
preparing to repulse
an enemy attack*

HEROES OF THE VICTORIA CROSS

*Paratrooper under
artillery fire in
Arnhem, 1944*



the streets were littered with dead soldiers, caught with nowhere to take cover and nothing to counter the armoured units.

In among the chaos, the battalion's commander was taken prisoner, along with hundreds of men under his command. Major Cain was barely able to escape with one company, totalling just 100 men. Running out of ammunition and food, the British were forced to retreat back west, to the village of Oosterbeek, where a defensive n-shaped perimeter was being formed by the surviving units.

Command over the eastern sector's defence fell to Major Lonsdale, who was well aware of the importance of the line holding. His force was all that would stop the Germans from cutting the Allied army off from the Rhine, driving a wedge between them and any hope of relief or escape. Now the men gathered in the little Dutch church to shoulder their weapons, snatch the final drags of their cigarettes and turn to face the pulpit above. "You know as well as I do there are a lot of bloody Germans coming at us," Lonsdale declares bluntly. "We must fight for our lives and stick together. We've fought the Germans before. They weren't good enough for us then, and they're bloody well not good enough for us now. They're up against the finest soldiers in the world ... Make certain you dig in well and that your weapons and ammo are in good order. We are getting short of ammo, so when you shoot, you shoot to kill. Good luck to you all." Cain and his men went outside to take up their positions and wait for the German men and tanks that were rumbling down the road to meet them.

Major Cain and the remaining troops of the 2nd South Staffordshire regiment were positioned on the southeast corner of the British perimeter, under Major Lonsdale's command. Their sector was closest to the Rhine, facing the direction of Arnhem in the east, from where the army has been retreating. Until the previous day, soldiers from the 1st Airborne Division had still been fighting to hold the bridge at Arnhem, but their defeat meant the full force of the German Panzer divisions would be directed at them. Wehrmacht troops and armour were bearing down on the British, and their efforts were focused on Lonsdale's force. Major Cain and his men were holding to the north of Oosterbeek's church, in trenches that covered open waste ground, as well as the roads to the east, which the Germans were expected to come down.

Once the Germans were spotted heading down the eastern road, Cain armed himself with a PIAT (projecting infantry anti-tank) gun, with Lieutenant Ian Meilke firing from the roof of a nearby house. He loaded and fired at the first tank, but the blast left no damage. Alerted to the threat from Cain's PIAT, the German gunner turned his tank's turret towards the officer. The blast from the shell obliterated the chimney Lieutenant Meilke was covered behind, killing him instantly and covering Cain in a curtain of falling debris. Undeterred, Cain remained in his position, continuing to fire on the tank until he was forced to take a new position out of the gun's sights. Not one of his shots penetrated the Tiger's 10cm (4in)-thick hull.

Once positioned in a nearby shed, Cain waited again until the tank was less than 45m

(150ft) away, then fired his PIAT once more. The shot exploded underneath the tank, but was again ineffective and the German gunner turned his sights on Cain's location again. Seeing the turret's movement, Cain had just seconds to gather his weapon and flee the shed before it was blown to pieces. Sprinting through machine-gun fire back to the cover of a building, he lay prone, reloaded his PIAT and fired at the tank two more times. This time his shots disabled the metal beast by blowing off one of its tracks. Though this prevents it from moving down the road, the turret continued to blast the British position with its fire. The tank's crew bailed out and attempted to attack on foot, but they were gunned down by Cain's men.

With another tank advancing down the road Cain took up position behind the corner of a building. As he jumped out from cover and pulled the trigger, his PIAT's bomb misfired and detonated just feet in front of him, blowing him back. Seeing the blast, his men feared the worst and rushed to his side. The explosion had completely blinded Cain, blackening his face, which was covered in tiny shrapnel shards from the blast. Alive, he began houting "like a hooligan" for someone to man the PIAT, Cain's men drag him from the field to be treated for his wounds. The tank was eventually disabled with PIAT fire, before one of the 75mm guns from the 1st Light Regiment was brought forward to blow it apart completely.

While being treated for his wounds Cain refused pain killers, which were in short supply. After about 30 minutes, with his sight returned, he decided to discharge himself. Finding blood rushing down his head, from burst eardrums as a result of the heavy blasts, he stuffed makeshift bandages into his ears before heading back to his sector. He directed more counter-attacks against the Germans with another PIAT. Wherever a tank was spotted, Cain rushed there, PIAT in hand, to disable it and his sector remained secure at the end of the day. The German attacks eventually began to concentrate elsewhere in the perimeter. Eyewitnesses claim Cain disabled or destroyed three tanks by the end of the day, and as many as seven by the end of the operation.



A British staff captain fires from 1st Airborne Division's headquarters in the Hartenstein hotel at Oosterbeek, during the battle for Arnhem

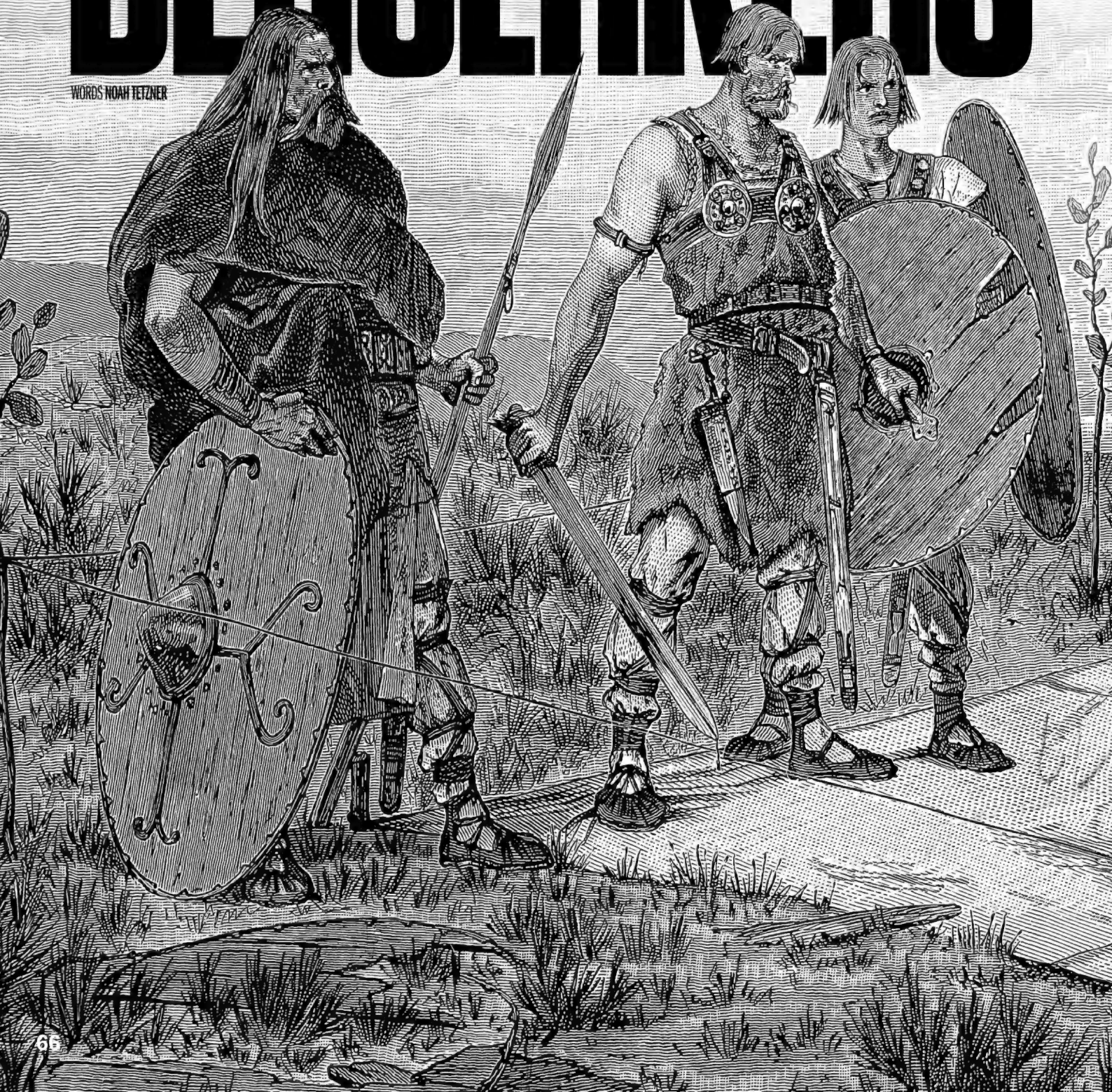
Images © Getty

THE AFTERMATH

After nearly six days of successfully defending attacks, the Allied perimeter at Oosterbeek finally retreated across the Rhine on Monday 25 September. Over 101 German artillery pieces had pummelled the British lines, devastating the area so terribly that it became nicknamed 'Der Hexenkessel' - 'the Witch's Cauldron' - by German soldiers. On the march back to friendly territory, the major even found the time to shave, in order to look more like an officer. After the war, Cain returned to his native Isle of Man and his job in the oil industry. He never talked about his Victoria Cross, and his family only learnt of its existence as they sorted through his belongings after his death in 1974. Operation Market Garden stands as among the last and worst major defeats of the British Army. With the launch of the largest aerial assault ever known, commanders had been hopeful of bringing an early end to the war, but the operation was a failure and only 2,700 soldiers out of the original 10,600 who set out to Holland returned home alive.

THE REAL BERSERKERS

WORDS NOAH TETZNER



Often depicted as ferocious madmen out of control on the battlefield, what is the real origin of these famed warriors of the Viking Age?

The Viking berserker is a figure caught between myth and reality. However, the enduring image of a howling madman, uncontrollable and reckless is unlikely to have actually existed. Instead, a warrior-class of skilled fighting men denoted the real Viking berserkers and there are many different accounts of these shield-biting warriors. Chosen men of the king's warband, trouble-making duelists, outlaws and traumatised veterans – these were the real berserkers. Though frenzied and fearless, they were not out of control, but skilled warriors who evoked 'berserksgangr', to strengthen themselves and frighten their foes.

The bellowing and shield-biting were deliberately provocative acts, evoked only before the battle began. As with the ancient Romans, the collective effort of the cohorts, or 'fylkinger' ('battle formations') described in the 13th century saga the *Heimskringla* or *The Chronicle of the Kings of Norway*, was emphasised. One warrior's valour was always important, but having uncontrollable men running about the battlefield would

Berserkers such as Ljot the Pale became rich by challenging weaker farmers for their lands in a type of duel known as hölmgang.

not help you win a war. The berserkers evoked the berserksgangr to frighten their enemies. In *Grettir's Saga*, a 14th century Icelandic narrative, we read of Snækollr, a berserker who sat atop his horse, biting his shield and howling before battle. Because he was only preparing for battle, Grettir caught him by surprise, attacking before he was ready.

Much like the All Blacks (New Zealand's rugby team) who perform a haka, or Maori dance, at the start of a rugby match, berserkers taunted their foes. The famed berserker-frenzy was probably a method of preparing for battle, instilling confidence and aggression in those who displayed it. Dr Roderick Dale, an archeologist and leading scholar of Viking berserkers, has argued that the berserker-frenzy was just a means to prepare for battle. As modern athletes prepare for their events, this ritual was meant to strengthen the warrior and demoralise his enemies.

A cult of bears and wolves

The prowess of berserkers is often likened to that of bears or wolves. Indeed, the word 'berserker' itself may be a combination of 'bear' and 'serk', meaning 'bear shirt'. According to the sagas, berserkers entered combat wearing wolf skins instead of chainmail. As pagans and followers of Odin, they may have kept rituals involving wolves or bears. In Roman legions, some warriors clad in wolfskins retained these rituals – standard bearers

"THOUGH FRENZIED AND FEARLESS, THEY WERE NOT OUT OF CONTROL, BUT SKILLED WARRIORS WHO EVOKED 'BERSERKSGANGR', TO STRENGTHEN THEMSELVES AND FRIGHTEN THEIR FOES"



THE REAL BERSERKERS

and certain types of light infantry wore these animal pelts, possibly denoting a warrior cult. The wolf was important to the Romans, relating to its very origins. In Norse mythology, wolves bore a similar importance associated with the god Odin whom the berserkers have always been linked with.

Bear claws and teeth have been found in graves dating to the Roman Iron Age and the Migration Period in Scandinavia history (400-550 BCE in Norway) just before the Viking Age. These finds may have been artefacts used in rituals, such as berserksgangr, or worn for personal adornment. Whatever their use, they prove that the bear was an important animal to the Vikings, some of whom became berserkers. The shield-biters of the sagas may well have belonged to these warrior-cults, with their intimidating battle dress, and war cry.

Veterans of the Viking Age

The berserkers of later Icelandic sagas are depicted roaming the countryside, harassing farmers and eventually killing them. These berserkers may have been veterans suffering from PTSD, given the number of people who 'went Viking', and were involved in mercenary warfare. After returning from service, they may have felt unwanted or were impoverished, plundering as a last resort. Mercenary service risked death and destitution – combine this with PTSD, and a recipe for disaster ensues, inflicted upon local farmers.

In the *Íslendingasögur* or *The Sagas of Icelanders*, we read of a very different kind of warrior from the chosen men of Scandinavian kings. In fact, fighting against berserkers almost became a rite of passage for the heroes of Viking sagas. These troublesome berserkers challenged weaker farmers for their lands, ladies, or both. The challenges were to

see if the farmer could beat the berserker in a type of duel known as 'hólmgang'. A mortal means of settling disputes, these duels had legal standing in Norway. The name 'hólmgang' literally means 'island-going', and while such duels did not always occur on islands, they were confined to small spaces. Though they did slaughter farmers, these shield-biters were not outlaws, but instigators and skilled duelists using legal means for personal gain.

In *Egil's Saga*, we read the account of a berserker named Ljot the Pale, who made his fortune slaughtering Norwegians. He had killed many good farmers after challenging them for their land, but made a mistake when he chose to torment Frithgeir, a small, slender man he could have easily butchered. This is because Frithgeir knew a man duty-bound to protect him, named Egil Skallagrímsson.

Ljot was determined to kill Frithgeir, eager to snatch the weaker man's sister. The saga recounts how when confronting Frithgeir, the berserker rolled his eyes unnervingly, uttering terrible howls and biting his shield. But when he saw Egil, the man truly worthy of a berserker's prowess, he decided to kill him first. Egil was ready for his duel with Ljot.

We read that stones were laid out to mark the duelling ground on Valdeyri island. Carrying a shield in his arm and a sword at his waist, he strode onto the duelling ground. Egil slashed at Ljot, brandishing his blade, delivering blows ferociously. The berserker parried with his shield, unable to return an attack. Egil delivered blow after blow. Ljot fled beyond the marker stones, running far across the surrounding field. The combatants decided to rest but finished their duel in a second round. Egil ran at Ljot, pressing up so close to him that he fell backward, his shield slipping to the side. Immediately, Egil struck

Odin, a god of warriors and chieftains was the leader of berserkers. As pagans, berserkers were devoted to him



Image: Wiki / PD / CC



© Getty

the hapless hero just above the knee, tearing his leg asunder. The berserker who killed many good farmers was finally dead.

Grettir's Saga tells of Norwegian farmers 'going Viking', returning home traumatised and forgotten. Skaldic lays, a type of Viking poetry, describe a loss of joy due to mental battle scars, and of coming home with a wooden leg, maimed in the heat of battle. These veterans, deprived of their glory, resorted to violence and plundering, escaping to Iceland and living as outlaws. Battlefield archeologist, Are Skarstein Kolberg, has likened these berserkers to the motorcycle club Hells Angels, formed by traumatised American veterans of the Vietnam War. One thousand years apart, the Viking Age and Vietnam War are different, yet the formation of battle trauma is much the same.

The berserker in battle

Scandinavian kings, such as Harald Fairhair, brought their berserkers to battle, deploying them where fighting was likely the fiercest. In the *Heimskringla*, we read that berserkers were placed near the prow of the king's longship at Hafrsfjord. This was a critical place in the battleline and one that required particularly brave warriors to defend. Hafrsfjord is one of the few naval battles of the Viking Age, a deadly style of combat summed up in *Heimskringla*, "It was then customary when men fought onboard ships to tie them together and fight in the prows." Naval battles often resulted in brutal hand-to-hand fighting, augmented by volleys of arrows and intense missile combat.

As the battle opened, the berserkers fell into their battle-frenzy. We can read about this frenzy in Viking literature, which involved bellowing and shield-biting, among other things. Their location near the prow of the longship

"THOUGH THEY DID SLAUGHTER FARMERS, THESE SHIELD-BITERS WERE NOT OUTLAWS, BUT INSTIGATORS AND SKILLED DUELISTS USING LEGAL MEANS FOR PERSONAL GAIN"

placed Harald's berserkers where the enemy was most likely to assault – a position that conferred great honour upon its occupants. These berserkers were an elite military unit, hand-chosen by the king himself.

The appearance of these warriors, their wolfskin coats so unlike the mail and linen garments that Harald's men were used to, distinguished them aboard the vast longship. Some of the warriors shook their weapons, but all fell into a pre-battle frenzy. The berserkers let out blood-curdling shrieks and howled like the beasts whose thick pelts adorned them. They bit their shields, working teeth against timber, and evoked the famed berserksgangr.

A brotherhood of outlaws

Berserkers often travelled in groups of 12, killing and marauding for personal gain. Individual berserkers tormented farmers for their lands and female relatives, yet groups of these warriors caused even greater harm. In *The Saga of King Heidrek the Wise*, we read of a full-scale battle between a brotherhood of berserkers and the chieftain Hjálmar. In this account, the brothers of Hjörvard, a warband of 12 berserkers, sought to defend their brother's honour, who had been challenged by Hjálmar,

a great chieftain of courageous spirit. Hjörvard and his brothers advanced through the harbour, their eyes set on the pair of enemy longships. The band of berserkers boarded these boats, the enemies seized their weapons. None left his post or uttered a word of fear. The brothers went up one side and down the other, slaughtering all on board.

Hjálmar and Odd, sworn-brothers and skilled warriors, had gone to the top of the island looking for the berserkers. As they returned from the forest, they noticed the shield-biters, their weapons bloody and swords drawn. Hjálmar knew that all of his men were dead, for he saw the berserkers leaving the longships. Fearful of the inglorious foe, the brothers risked a grave defeat should they come against the berserkers. Yet, the sworn-brothers had no mind to flee from battle. Coming upon the warrior band, Hjálmar and his companion set eyes on Angantýr, the berserker who wielded a magical sword. Odd, bearing a magical means of his own, wore the silken shirt that no weapon could bite. After coming to blows, Odd felled all 11 brothers. Now only Angantýr remained. Hjálmar fought the lone berserker, and while wounded 16 times, finally struck him dead. Following the battle, Hjálmar died of his wounds, but the brothers of Hjörvard would fight no more.

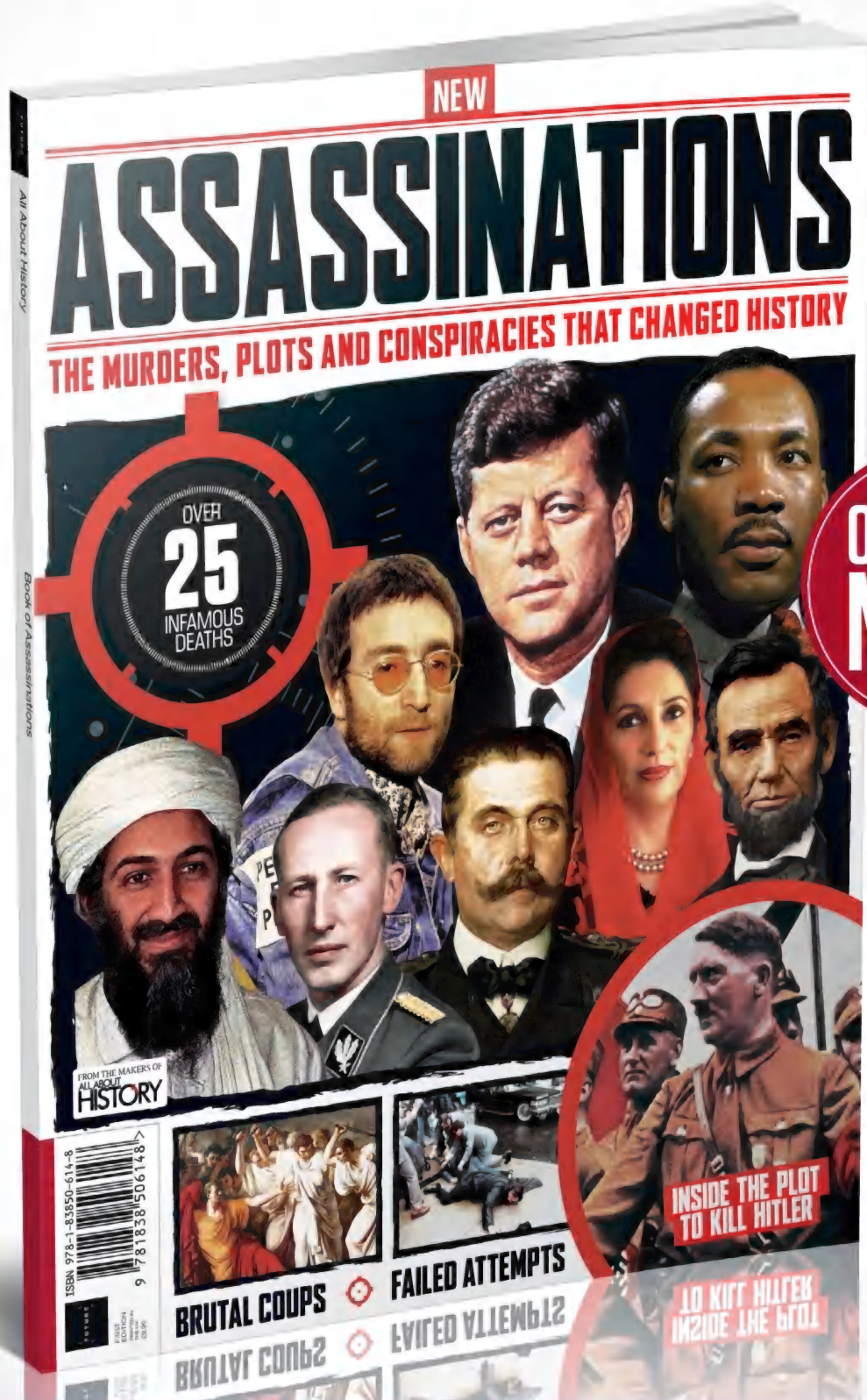
In *Grettir's Saga*, berserkers roam the countryside, wreaking havoc and robbing the locals. As governor of Norway, Earl Eric Hákanesson deemed berserkers 'outlaws', forcing them to gang up in order to protect themselves. If berserkers were eventually outlawed during the Viking Age, it would make sense for them to band together. Living as outlaws, they might have preferred a life on the run, as the pagan warlords they used to serve were replaced by Christian kings.

As chosen men in the king's warband, berserkers were placed near the prow of Harald Fairhair's longship

NOAH TETZNER HOSTS THE HISTORY OF VIKINGS PODCAST, WHICH FEATURES SCHOLARLY DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE HISTORY OF MEDIEVAL SCANDINAVIA & ICELAND. LISTEN IN ON APPLE PODCASTS, SPOTIFY, OR GOOGLE PODCASTS.

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HOME FRONT



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80 years ago this month, Buckingham Palace was struck by German bombs as the Blitz began



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The Royal Mint commemorates VJ Day 75



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The latest films and books on your screens and shelves



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Artefact of War: Picton's hat

MUSEUMS & EVENTS

Discover the Royal Mint's contribution to WWII, Kent's newly reopened engineering museum and how to adopt a piece of British aviation history

Adopt an aerial artefact

The Royal Air Force Museum is encouraging visitors to adopt many of their unique exhibits, from famous aircraft to surprisingly historic soft toys



Spread across two major venues in London and Cosford, Shropshire, the Royal Air Force Museum is dedicated to the story of Britain's aerial warfare force. Its huge collection of approximately 1.3 million objects includes everything from aircraft to small, personal items. The museum has now announced a scheme for members of the public to adopt one of over 50 objects from the museum's collection.

'Adopt an Artefact' is a unique opportunity for everyone to be part of the RAF's story, while raising funds for the museum. The selected highlights include iconic objects that each have their own fascinating story to tell. These items include small items like lapel badges and lucky mascots to more iconic artefacts such as aircraft and even relics from the Dambusters Raid and the Great Escape.

Artefacts are available to adopt across three tiers (Standard, Enhanced and Executive) with adoptions starting at £25. Each artefact adoption lasts for 12 months from the date they are adopted and adoptees can also choose to add Gift Aid, which will increase their donation by 25 percent for no extra cost.

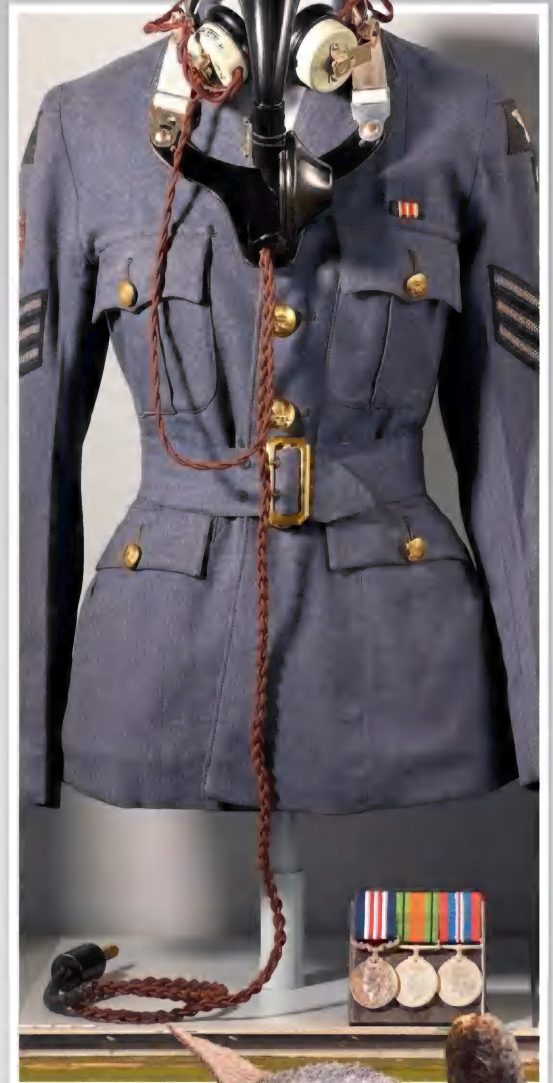
All adoptees will receive a digital adoption certificate and photograph of their adopted

artefact along with exclusive information on your chosen object throughout the year. Recognition of an adoption will feature alongside the object on 'Collections Online', the museum's new digital collections system. If an artefact is purchased as a gift, or in memory of a loved one, you have the option to include a dedicated message along with the name of the adoptee. Artefacts can be adopted on an individual or corporate basis and those adopting one of the 'Exclusive' tier items will receive additional benefits tailored to their adoption.

Edward Sharman, head of development at the museum says, "Support from adoptees will help the museum to continue sharing the RAF story to engage, inspire and encourage learning for current and future generations. This is a fantastic opportunity to be part of the RAF's history and to receive something unique in return for your support. Each item tells its own fascinating RAF story, whether it's a stuffed toy with an adventurous past to large iconic Battle of Britain aircraft, there is something to inspire and connect everyone."

As of August 2020, Chelsea Football Club has already adopted the museum's Avro Lancaster bomber.

For more details on how to 'Adopt an Artefact' and to browse the items available visit: www.rafmuseum.org.uk/support-us/adopt-an-artefact



The uniform of Avis Hearn, a WAAF who was awarded the Military Medal for remaining at her post during a Luftwaffe attack during the Battle of Britain

Twinkletoes the Cat was the lucky charm of Arthur Whitten Brown who flew alongside Captain John Alcock in a Vickers Vimy during the first ever non-stop transatlantic flight in 1919



Return of the Engineers

Kent's largest military museum has reopened its doors in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic so that visitors can once again uncover the story of Britain's regiment of sappers

The Royal Engineers Museum in Gillingham has reopened to the public after being closed during the Covid-19 pandemic. The museum tells the story of the Royal Engineers and how they have helped the British Army live, move and fight for over 300 years. Its highlights include 25 Victoria Crosses, the Duke of Wellington's map of Waterloo, a huge section of the Berlin Wall, a Harrier jump jet, a V2 rocket and weapons from the Anglo-Zulu War.

The museum is now operating on reduced opening hours, pre-booked entrance times and a one-way system that will encourage visitors to return. Rebecca Nash, director of the museum states, "We are delighted to welcome visitors back to the Royal Engineers Museum. These unparalleled times have exacted a great toll on so many lives and our target has been to ensure a safe enjoyable environment for our dedicated team and customers alike. We've thoroughly prepared our historic site to adhere to the guidelines laid out by the Government and to achieve the 'We're Good To Go' standard. The relaunch of the museum's galleries and services will hopefully encourage our visitors to be further inspired by the history of the Royal Engineers' innovative approach to unprecedented challenges."

The Royal Engineers Museum's 'Ravelin Building' was itself designed by a Royal Engineer major and completed in 1905



One of the museum's many artefacts on display is a German V2 rocket



© Mike Jernan

For more information visit:
www.re-museum.co.uk

Female staff of the Royal Mint pictured at work during WWII



© Royal Mint Museum

Coins of Peace

The Royal Mint has released a special 75th anniversary coin to commemorate the end of WWII in August 1945

The Royal Mint is the government-owned body that has been producing coins for England, and latterly the United Kingdom, for over 1,100 years. During WWII, it played an important role that ensured that Britain did not suffer coin shortages. By 1943 its output had even doubled to issuing 700 million coins a year despite the threat of bombing. It additionally continued producing overseas coins, including for Iceland, and the Mint's basement acted as an air raid shelter although three of its staff were killed.

In this period 20 per cent of the Mint's male staff volunteered or were conscripted into the British armed forces and so from June 1941 the employment of women in coin production began. By 1942, the superintendent of the Operative Department hailed female labour as "an important innovation" and in that year the coining department produced a record-breaking 54 million pieces in one month. By 1943, women accounted for 29 per cent of the total workforce with staff working all week with limited annual leave. This dedication ensured that the Mint continued to operate effectively throughout the war.

To commemorate the 75th anniversary of the end of WWII, the Royal Mint has produced a commemorative £5 coin. It is available to buy as limited-edition gold Proof, silver Proof and silver Proof Piedfort variations alongside a Brilliant Uncirculated edition. The coin's design captures the magnitude of events and was inspired by British war memorial inscriptions.

A gold Proof coin to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the end of WWII pictured in its case box



© Royal Mint Museum

For more information and to purchase a coin visit:
www.royalmint.com



WWII THIS MONTH...

SEPTEMBER 1940

To commemorate 80 years since the Second World War, History of War will be taking a look at some of the key events taking place during each month of the conflict



“THE CHILDREN WON’T LEAVE WITHOUT ME, I WON’T LEAVE WITHOUT THE KING AND THE KING WILL NEVER LEAVE”

Shortly after the failure of the Luftwaffe to destroy the RAF, the Germans scaled up bombing raids on Britain’s major cities, beginning the period known as the Blitz. The Royal Family had decided to remain in London

despite this threat, and on 8 September, Buckingham Palace was itself struck by a 50kg high-explosive bomb. The palace was hit a total of 16 times during the Blitz, all while the King and his family were in residence.



© Getty



THE AXIS GROWS

In Berlin, 27 September, the Japanese ambassador to Germany, Saburo Kurusu, along with Italian foreign minister Galeazzo Ciano and Adolf Hitler, signed a defensive pact agreeing mutual cooperation in the 'new order' across Europe and Asia. The Tripartite Pact in effect added Japan into the Axis alliance, a phrase first coined by Mussolini in 1936, in reference to Berlin and Rome. Though Japan remained the sole East Asian signatory to the pact, further European states, including Hungary and Bulgaria, also joined the Axis months later.



JAPAN OCCUPIES VIETNAM

From the outset of its war in China, Japan had begun placing tremendous pressure on the French colonial administration of Indochina (today, Vietnam), with a view to expanding its influence and control across the region, as well as cutting off the supply of weapons and supplies to mainland China. After the fall of

France earlier the same year, Japan saw the chance to forcibly occupy the country. On 22 September Governor General Jean Decoux agreed to Japanese troops crossing the border to Indochina, and occupying several airfields. Under agreement the French administration was allowed to remain in place during this occupation, however it was finally overthrown in 1945, in the face of the Allied advance.

"AFTER THE FALL OF FRANCE EARLIER THE SAME YEAR, JAPAN SAW THE CHANCE TO FORCIBLY OCCUPY THE COUNTRY"



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REVIEWS

Our pick of the latest military history books and films

COUP 53

A DECADE-LONG INVESTIGATION INTO THE 1953 COUP IN IRAN UNEARTHS BRITAIN'S SECRET INVOLVEMENT, WITH GROUNDBREAKING IMPLICATIONS THAT ARE STILL FELT OVER 60 YEARS LATER

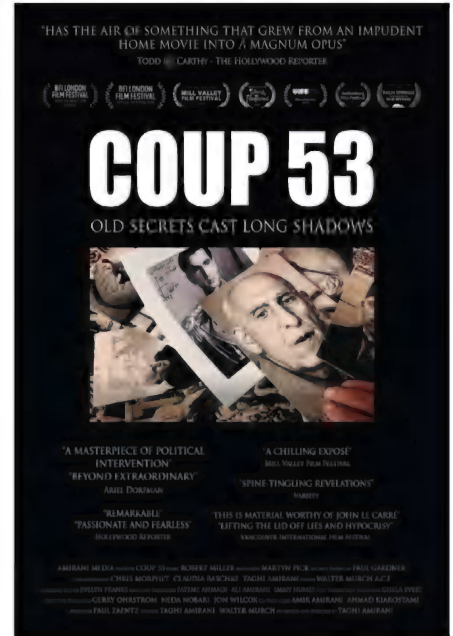
Director: Taghi Amirani **Editor:** Walter Murch **Featuring:** Ralph Fiennes

In August 1953, Iranian prime minister Mohammad Mosaddegh was arrested and removed from power, replaced by a military regime with the Shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, at its head. It was an event that changed the course of Iran's history away from democracy and reform under Mosaddegh, and towards an autocracy. Historians have pointed to the 1953 coup as one of the principal causes of the 1979 Iranian Revolution, the importance of which cannot be overstated when discussing the last 50 years of the Middle East's history.

Though the CIA has since acknowledged – some might even say taken credit for – its involvement in the regime change, the UK has not admitted its involvement. In *Coup 53*, all the evidence presented leads to the damning conclusion that not only were

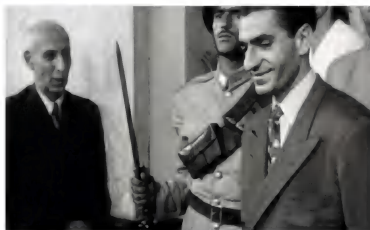
British intelligence agents involved in the coup, they were its originators. For those less knowledgeable of the full context surrounding the coup d'etat, filmmaker Taghi Amirani provides a more than adequate crash course in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, British interests and influence in the region, as well as America's anti-Communist policies and Cold War paranoia.

With the background established, Amirani takes us through his years of research into the coup d'etat, its origins and unsolved mysteries. Born in Iran, he moved to the UK in 1975, while the Shah was still in power and his personal investment is truly the beating heart of the film. From Washington to Berlin we follow as he tracks every last document and piece of interview footage. Often it is as though Amirani is hunting ghosts – a majority



of those involved in the coup, or associated Mosaddegh at the time are now deceased. One elusive character, a British agent, soon emerges from Amirani's research as the key to proving Britain's role in the coup.

Engaging, engrossing and ultimately eye-widening, this film brilliantly sets the historical record straight. **TW**



WWW.COUP53.COM FOR RELEASE DATES AND MORE DETAILS

IRON EMPIRES

THE FASCINATING STORY BEHIND THE BIRTH OF AMERICA'S FIRST 'BIG BUSINESS'

Author: Michael Hiltzik **Publisher:** Amberley **Price:** £25

You don't need to be a railway enthusiast to be captivated by this new book from Pulitzer Prize-winning author Michael Hiltzik – the story of America's railroads is about far more than locomotives and train stations. It is as much about the people who worked on these immense projects, the communities made, shaped and destroyed by the twin rails snaking over the continent, and the men who controlled and directed the entire enterprise – the infamous 'robber barons' who made vast fortunes and just as often lost them again.

Hiltzik contends that the railways were America's first 'big business'. When the first lines were proposed, the train was little more than an oddity, a new-fangled mode of transport that traditionalists despised – trains would surely never replace steamships as the most important mode of transport. The picture would change dramatically in just a few decades.

In 1812, a relatively modest proposal to build a railroad across New York State was considered almost farcical, but by 1869 the Transcontinental Railroad linked east coast to west (at least it nearly did, it actually finished a hundred miles short of the west coast). The railroad was now the dominant form of transport in a nation just starting to flex its industrial muscle, and would remain so until the invention of the automobile.

The shocking speed of travel by steam locomotive was one advantage. The New York businessman Asa Whitney had his first trip by train in 1844, and his verdict was dramatic,

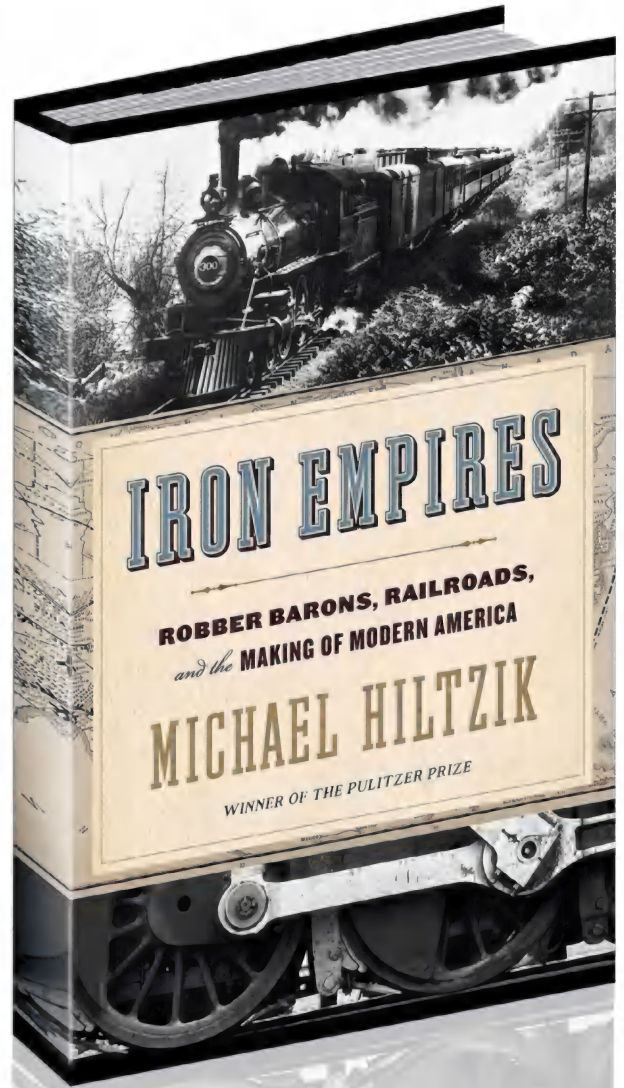
"Time & space are annihilated," he noted in his diary. He had travelled at 25 miles per hour.

The railroads also had the benefit of going wherever they wanted, within reason. They did not have to follow the long and lazy loops on the Mississippi – they could travel as straight as an arrow, and journey times were slashed. It took four days to travel the length of the Erie Canal, while the equivalent journey by train took about five hours.

Business applications were obviously of huge importance, but many also grasped the railway's potential in wartime. The use of trains to transport and concentrate forces during the American Civil War is often touted as one of the defining elements of that conflict (trains would play a similar role around the same time in the Franco-Prussian War).

The science behind the industry, however, and the impact it had on the American landscape and economy, are only parts of the story. Hiltzik's book really comes to life when he turns his attention to the men behind the business – famous (or infamous) names like J.P. Morgan, E.H. Harriman and Cornelius Vanderbilt. The savage competition between such men would spill over into the American economy as a whole, to the point that President Theodore Roosevelt would call them "malefactors of great wealth" and work to clip their wings.

By the time you reach this final stop in Hiltzik's book, you will be as surprised as those getting their first taste of the railroads had once been at how quickly your journey has ended. **DS**

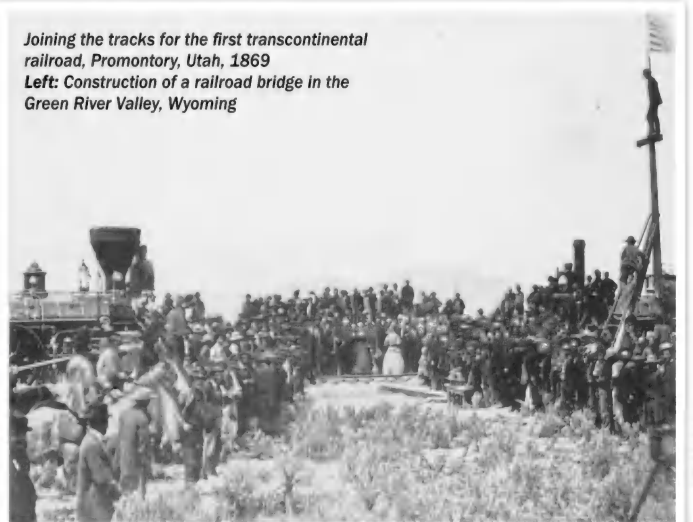


"THE USE OF TRAINS TO TRANSPORT AND CONCENTRATE FORCES DURING THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR IS OFTEN TOUTED AS ONE OF THE DEFINING ELEMENTS OF THAT CONFLICT"



Joining the tracks for the first transcontinental railroad, Promontory, Utah, 1869

Left: Construction of a railroad bridge in the Green River Valley, Wyoming



FORTRESS BUDAPEST

A MAMMOTH TWO-VOLUME WORK THAT COMPREHENSIVELY DETAILS THE BRUTAL BATTLE FOR HUNGARY'S CAPITAL, UTILIZING A MASS OF PREVIOUSLY INACCESSIBLE ARCHIVAL DOCUMENTS TO PRODUCE A STUNNING PIECE OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH

Writer: Kamen Nevenkin **Publisher:** PeKo Publishing Kft **Price:** £89.99

The opening of formerly closed Soviet archives has allowed Nevenkin – a Bulgarian historian – to re-assess the savagely-fought battles that culminated in a Red Army victory as the Hungarian capital finally succumbed. Sometimes overshadowed by what was happening on the Western front at the same time, as the much more famous Ardennes 'Battle of the Bulge' was being fought, Nevenkin paints a complex and in-depth picture of a defining conflict in Hungary's recent history, describing the often desperate defence put up by the combined German-Magyar forces as they vainly tried to hold the Soviets back. The level of detail the author includes is truly extraordinary; the first volume is text and is over 1,100 pages long, while the second contains maps, sketches of

Axis defences and a panoply of photographs stretching to almost 500 pages.

Broken down to cover the fighting on a day-by-day basis, what could be a dry history is brought to life by Nevenkin's liberal use of eyewitness testimony from Hungarian, German and Soviet veterans as well as Budapest's residents. It is this testimony that captures the reader, and draws them into a battle whose final result was never in doubt, but highlights the often see-saw nature of the fighting as the Soviet attackers first broke through the city's Attila fortifications, and then took the city literally street by street and block by block. Nevenkin also covers the oft-neglected aerial battles during the siege, as well as logistics and the attempted break out, where fewer than a thousand of the 100,000-strong garrison managed to reach Axis lines to the west. **JT**



TOXIC

Author: Dan Kaszeta
Publisher: Hurst
Price: £25.00
Format: Hardback
Released: Out now

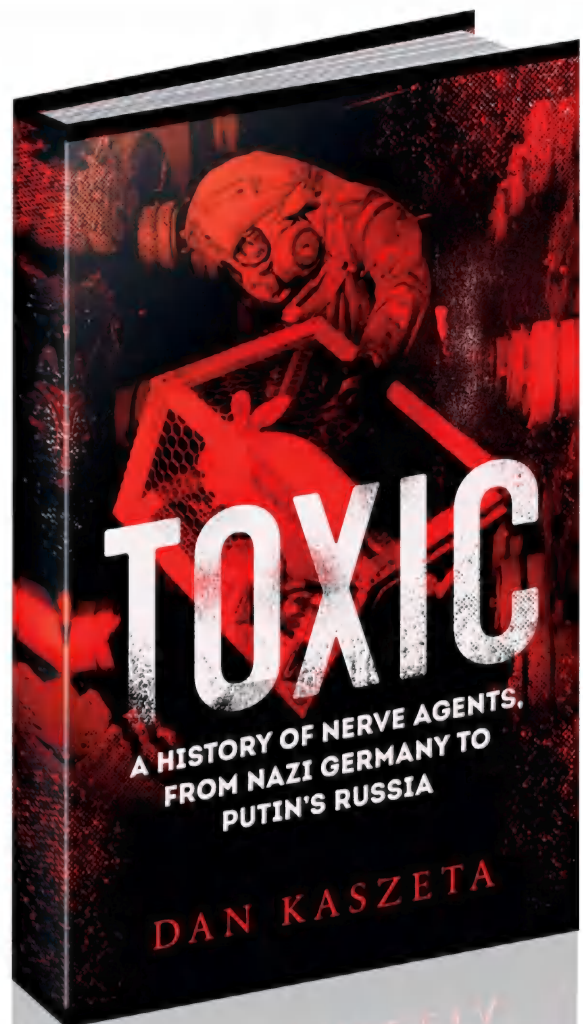
DESPITE THE BAN ON CHEMICAL WEAPONS IMPOSED BY THE CHEMICAL WEAPONS CONVENTION OF 1997, NERVE AGENTS ARE STILL DEPLOYED IN WAR ZONES AND BY AGENTS FROM MALAYSIA TO SALISBURY

Dan Kaszeta's chilling account of the history of nerve agents takes the reader back to antiquity and the poisonous Calabar bean, used in West Africa in judicial proceedings on people accused of a grave crime. If the victim survived, he was presumed innocent. Death by poisoning was taken as proof of guilt. It was a kind of Russian roulette, an apt description in light of the 2018 Novichok attack in Salisbury on Russian double agent Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia.

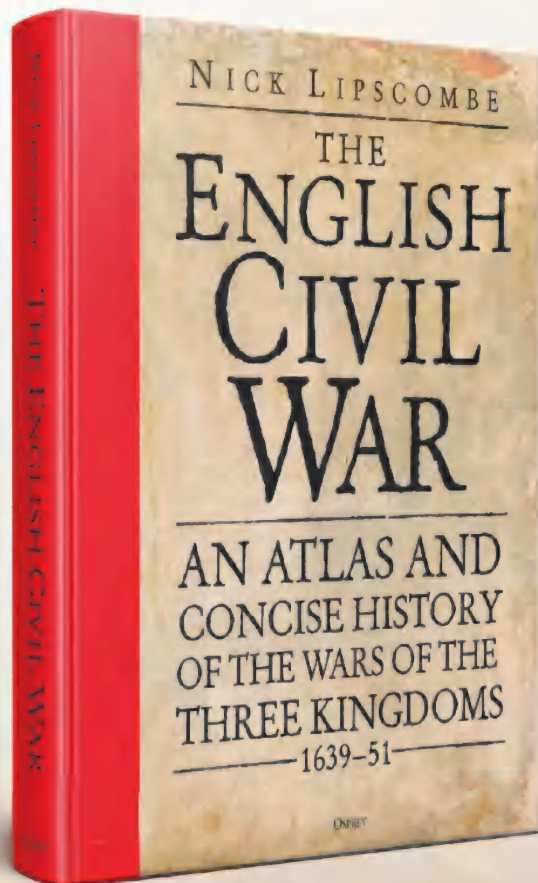
The author, a former soldier in the US Army, explains that nerve agents were first developed in Nazi Germany, though ironically they were never used by Hitler's regime. It was the Iran-Iraq War of 1980-88 that saw the first significant battlefield use of nerve agents. It was in the closing months of that conflict when Saddam Hussein's regime began unleashing nerve agents on civilians.

Kaszeta's grim but fascinating narrative goes beyond cataloguing the historic growth of nerve agents by warring states. He describes the effect this deadly substance can have on the brain and the likely connection between nerve agent exposure and mental illness. He brings to light incidents like US workers in Cold War manufacturing and storage programmes who were considered 'abnormal', as well as the chronic and multi-symptomatic disorders related to the Gulf War Syndrome of the early 1990s.

From Sarin to Novichok, the 21st century demonstrates that the use of nerve agents, far from being an unethical and unacceptable practice, is an increasing threat to civilian populations across the world, be it part of conventional wars or state-sponsored assassinations. "The greatest sin of nerve agents," says the author, is their disproportionate effect on the innocent and unprotected.' **JS**



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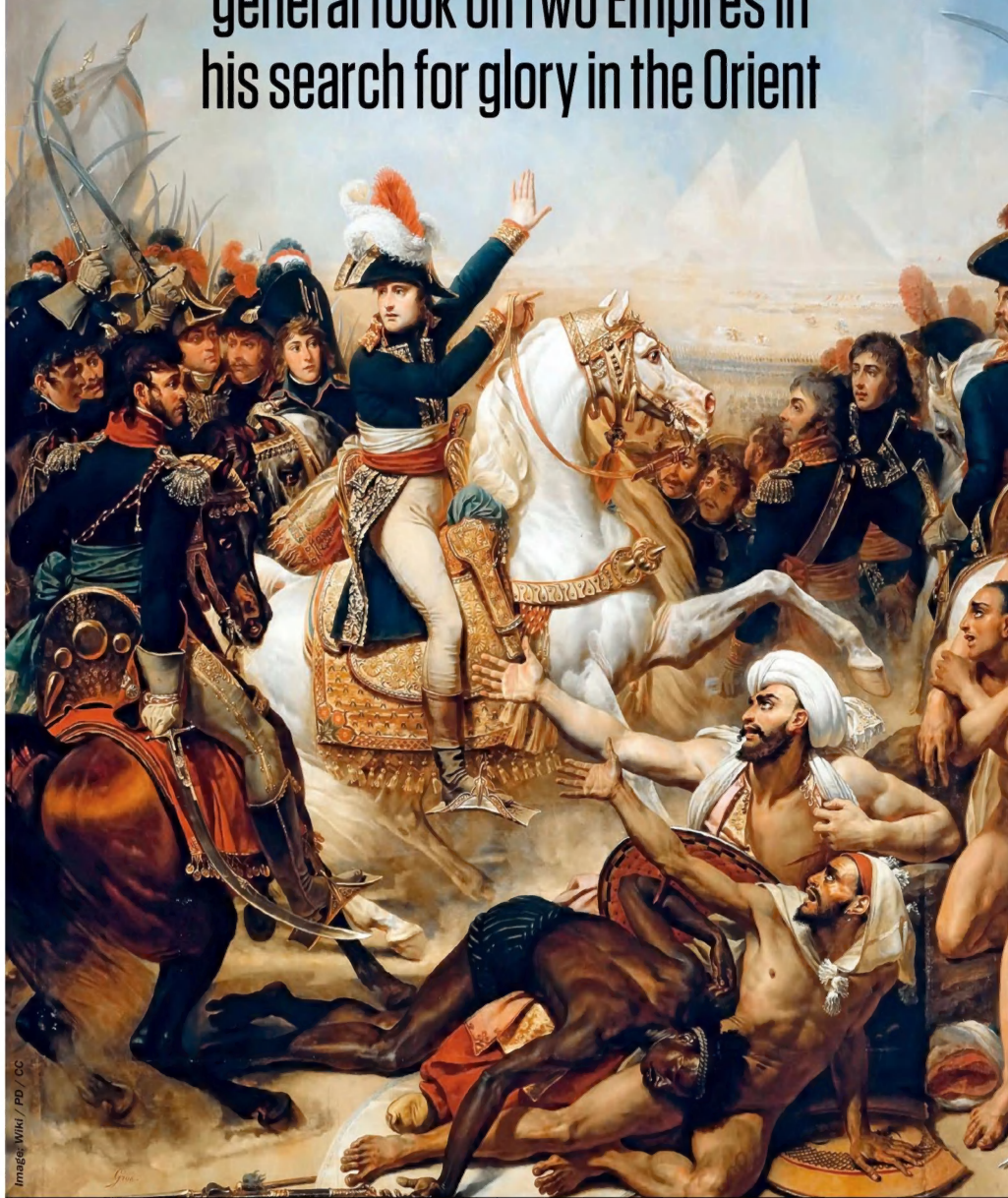
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How the ambitious French
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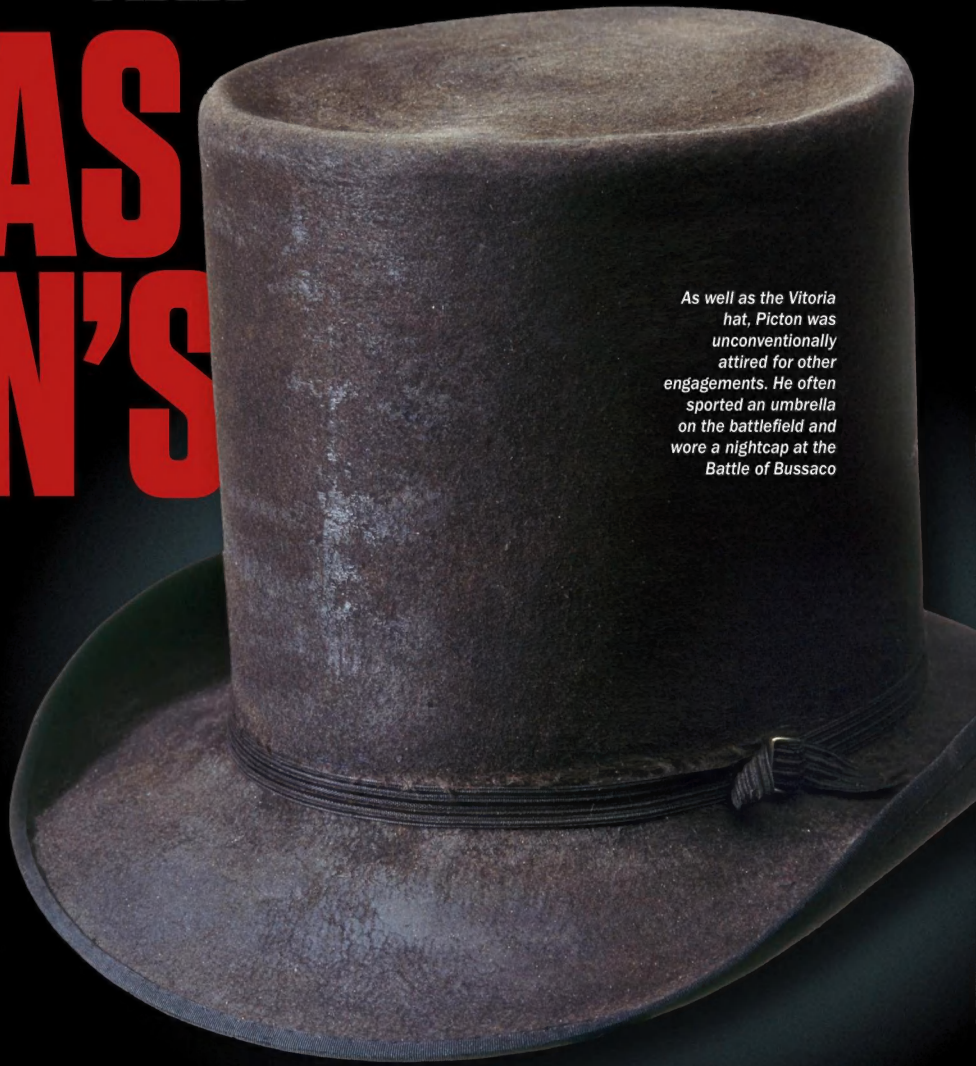
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THOMAS PICTON'S HAT

This civilian headpiece was worn by a convicted criminal and eccentric British general at the Battle of Vitoria during the Peninsular War



As well as the Vitoria hat, Picton was unconventionally attired for other engagements. He often sported an umbrella on the battlefield and wore a nightcap at the Battle of Bussaco



Source: Wiki / PD / CC

A Welshman from Pembrokeshire, Lieutenant-General Sir Thomas Picton joined the British Army in the early 1770s and served as the governor of Trinidad during 1797-1803. He administered a brutal regime over the island's slaves where severe corporal punishments and executions were commonplace. He was forced to resign after being accused of approving the torture of a mixed-race teenage girl and was found guilty by a British court. An 1808 retrial led to his sentence being indefinitely postponed before he was appointed to command the 3rd Division in Iberia in 1810.

The Duke of Wellington had mixed feelings about Picton but respected his fighting skills, "I found him a rough foul-mouthed devil as ever lived, but he always behaved extremely well."

Despite his crimes and battlefield experience, Picton eventually showed signs of exhaustion from violence. He once wrote after the Siege of Badajoz, "Military reputation is not to be purchased without blood, and ambition has nothing to do with humanity"

Picton fought in many battles of the Peninsular War including the Battles of Bussaco and Fuentes de Oñoro as well as the Sieges of Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz.

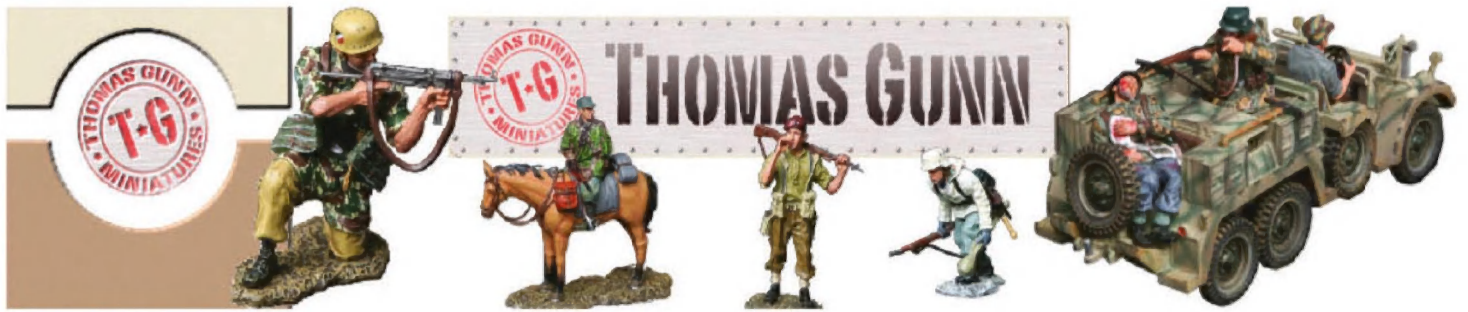
Well known for his eccentricities, Picton frequently flouted dress regulations and often wore civilian clothing. Nevertheless, his battlefield successes led to his troops being called the 'Fighting' 3rd Division and he played a key role at the Battle of Vitoria on 21 June 1813. Wearing the pictured top hat, Picton was suffering from inflammation of the eyes during the battle but he attacked the French without waiting for reinforcements from the 7th Division. He led his men across an important bridge under heavy fire but quickly secured the position. The 3rd Division suffered losses of 1,800 casualties during the battle but Picton's reputation was secured. He was later killed leading his men on horseback at the Battle of Waterloo. His last words, before he was shot by a musket ball through the temple, were, "Charge! Charge! Hurrah! Hurrah!"

Picton's hat is part of the collections of the National Army Museum in Chelsea, London. For more information visit:

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